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EARLY CHURCH HISTORY

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EARLY CHURCH HISTORY

TO A.D. 313

BY

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IN TWO VOLUMES

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TO

My Wife

PREFACE

In the present work the writer's aim is to trace the growth of Christianity in its connexion with the general history of the time, indicating the lines of thought, and noting the forces that made for change, but without any attempt to give an exhaustive account. For this reason the subjects are taken in a roughly chronological order; and since the history concerns the general reader as well as the student of Theology, the original languages are almost entirely excluded from the text, and only a few books are named after each chapter for further study. In a word, the work is a narrative, not a repertory of facts and writers on the facts like von Schubert's excellent *Kirchengeschichte.*

No attempt has been made to conceal personal opinions. The mere annalist may be able to do it, but the historian cannot, unless he accepts theories of determinism which turn Universal Law into universal nonsense by refusing to recognize the plainest facts of universal experience. Lord Acton himself—and we have seen no more impartial man

in our time — very plainly shewed his personal opinions. Events, and still more men, cannot be understood without imagination and sympathy; and imagination and sympathy involve opinions which (whether true or false) can always be disputed. Since then such opinions must of necessity colour the narrative, they are better frankly stated than silently taken for granted. Impartiality does not consist in a refusal to form opinions, or in a futile concealment of them under a lofty affectation of treating history scientifically, but in forming them by a single-hearted effort to realize the lives of men and think their thoughts again, and understand their whole environment. Our power is strictly measured by our sympathy. The demand of some that personal opinions should not be discoverable means the abolition of everything that can reasonably be called history; or else it is the suppression of some other men's opinions—for these writers are often far from reticent about their own.

The writer has not hesitated to repeat certain passages of his earlier works, though never without careful revision. In this connexion he has to acknowledge the courtesy of the Syndics of the University Press, in allowing him to take for the basis of Ch. III. an article he wrote for them on the Roman Empire as far back as 1889. Other obligations are too numerous and too intricate to be enumerated:

but all books mentioned have been found useful, and many others also.

It remains for him to give his best thanks to his wife and to Mr. H. F. Stewart of St. John's College for their care in looking over the proofs, and to Mr. T. R. Glover of St. John's College for many valuable suggestions in addition.

GRANGE OVER SANDS,
June 28, 1909.

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CHAPTER I

CHURCH HISTORY IN GENERAL

The history of the Church of God is in its widest compass coextensive with the history of the universe itself. It reaches backward to the timeless state before the dawn of life, and forward to the timeless state where there shall be no more death. The foundations and the completion of the City of God are not of this creation. From a far past on which the astronomer himself must speak with bated breath, and onward to a future far beyond the brightest visions of apocalyptic trance, the vast evolution forms a single and organic whole, and every part of it is meaningless without the rest. If it was not fitting that the Son of God should come on earth and dwell among us till the work of all but everlasting ages had prepared the earth for man, and man himself had learned his weakness in centuries of waning hope and conscious failure, neither was it fitting that the earth should be so prepared for man, and man himself condemned to restlessness and inward strife by the instinct for things divine implanted in him, if his noblest aspirations were never to be consecrated and fulfilled by the incarnate Lord of all.

Even in a narrower sense than this, Church History is still a subject of gigantic range. It is the spiritual side of universal history since man's appearance on the earth. It is not to be limited to the outward fortunes of sects and churches, or to the growth of institutions and forms of thought. It must rise above the disputes of parties, churches, and religions, and look beyond the broadest differences of race and civilization to the spiritual life of mankind, for it is the working-out in time of God's eternal thought of mercy. We cannot set aside the pagan and the heretic, for he that knows not God is known of God, and the Spirit of God strives with him as with ourselves.

It is more than the history of religion. The Lord came not to found a religion, but to be Himself the revelation. Two simple rites excepted, we cannot trace to Him any ceremony of worship, or even any definite command to hold common worship at all. He did not even come to teach morality, but to reveal the love of God by words and deeds and loving signs, and to give His life in life and death for every man. So the Person of the Lord is itself the revelation, and the historic facts through which we know Him constitute the Gospel. The dogmas of churches are their interpretations by men, representing all degrees of certainty from the Lord's divinity down to transubstantiation. Thus all specifically Christian theology is an expansion of "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," and all purely Christian ethics can be reduced to an argument from Christ's example. If our Lord was pure and true, what manner of men ought we to be? If then the Gospel is a revelation of the eternal through facts of time, it cannot be

treated simply as one religion among others. Given the revelation of God, comparative religion may help to shew us how the forces of human nature clothed it with religions of men; but the application of comparative religion to the revelation itself is a fundamental error.

We therefore start from the position that Church history is simply the spiritual side of universal history, just as Economic History is its economic side. Everything belongs to it which has ever influenced the development of the spiritual life of men. Some ages or some countries may seem as remote from the central revelation as they are from the general course of history; yet even these must have their bearing on it if history is, as it must be, one organic whole. Christianity is an aggressive faith, whatever else it be; and the power which long ago subdued Greece and Rome and England is not likely to be finally defeated in India or China, or even by the stubborn unbelief of Israel. To the student who is willing to remember that men are men, and that even the revelation through the Christ must work on men through men, the advance of Christianity in our own time by settlements, by missions, and by general influence is even more impressive and suggestive of living power than the conversion of the Roman Empire. Truly very much remains to be done, even among Christian peoples. A world of armed peace and tariff wars, of brutal militarism and godless competition, of cruel selfishness and recrudescent superstition, is not yet become the kingdom of our God. Yet for all this, the Gospel has tightened its hold on each successive age of the world, and most of all on our own age. There is not

the smallest sign that its ancient might is failing, or that the unrest and blatant unbelief around us are anything more than the unsettlement we see in every age of change. Sooner or later the ends of the earth will surely blend their history with ours, and have churches of their own as richly gifted as any of their teachers.

Nevertheless, it is usually convenient to narrow again the meaning of Church history by leaving out of its direct purview everything that took place before the coming of the Lord, or outside the visible societies which trace their origin to him; and this is the common use of the term. By thus limiting the subject we give it more unity, and cut off some of the isolated matters which few students can discuss at first hand. Yet even so, it is the spiritual side of the history of civilized peoples ever since our Master's coming. Whatever was carried over from the past of Greece and Rome, it is abundantly clear that modern civilization owes everything to Christianity, which delayed the fall of the Empire and saved whatever was saved from the wreck of ancient culture, trained the northern nations for the work of a new age, gave the guiding thoughts to science, and in the Reformation put new life into the conscience of the Western nations.

Our own purpose, however, is subject to a still further limitation. Of the three great periods of Church history—the early, the mediæval, and the modern—we are concerned only with the first, and only with the earlier part of that. We have to do with still earlier times only so far as they may help to explain our own period, with later times only so far as we may find it useful to mention the results

of causes which lie before us. Our proper subject belongs to the history of the Church in the ancient world before it passed into the mediæval. Now, though we get a fairly clear break at the Edict of Milan in 313, we have no sharp division there. Even the persecutions are not quite ended, and Julian is still unborn. The struggle with heathenism went on for another century; and when the victory seemed finally won, the contest was renewed inside the Church. The christening of the Palace and the Empire, the splendour of the churches, the noise of councils, and the change from an age of martyrs to an age of martyr-worshippers, blind us to the continuity of common Christian thought and life between the third and fifth centuries. The undogmatic, almost Deist Christianity so common in the Nicene age is deeply rooted in the time before it; and the growing superstition of the declining Empire is due to heathen conceptions of religion which are almost as clear in Cyprian as in Gregory the Great. *Victi victores*, as of old. Upon the whole, however, the Edict of Milan is the most convenient landmark we can find. The defeat of heathenism was undeniable; and though some hoped or feared that victory might still come round again to the side of the immortal gods, each passing year seemed to seal afresh the triumph of the Gospel. So when the last imperial champion of the gods lay dying in his tent, far out beyond the Eastern frontier of the Empire, the romancers were not far wrong who placed on his lips the cry *Vicisti Galilaee*!

So if we take the Edict of Milan for our *Terminus*, we shall do so under no delusion that it marks a rigid separation from later times. We draw no hard and

fast line. We are not bound to do more than sketch such beginnings of later developments as we can find before 312, and we are not prevented from glancing at survivals of earlier history as late as we can find them.

We shall begin with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70, or perhaps rather with the Neronian persecution of 64, which first brought Christianity prominently before the world. We cannot of course omit the preparation for the Gospel and its early spread; but it will be more convenient to leave the detailed treatment of them to New Testament scholars. In these pages nothing more than the barest outline is attempted.

Church history has not always had a bad name in England. It was as respectable as any other till it was covered with reproach by the partizanship and credulity of the Tractarians. Whatever service they did by calling attention to the subject was far outweighed by the scandal of their uncritical methods and unhistorical dogmas. The reproach is not yet done away, for the literature with which the successors of that school have flooded the country is little better than a dream. Its writers often have their merit; but their fundamental dogmas compel them systematically to set aside the plainest facts of history and human nature. So the outsiders who take their ideas of the subject from its professed experts are still too much inclined either to set it aside with sarcastic politeness, or by way of reaction to rush into excesses of scepticism. In truth, the Church historian is like any other historian. His material is the same, for all the facts of universal history

concern him. His purpose is the same, for he has to sift out those facts and trace a certain line of growth, like the political, the constitutional, or the economic historian. The facts are the same for all of them, and only their points of view are different, so that what occupies the foreground for one may be less conspicuous to another. Above all, his methods are the same. He has to decipher his authorities, to compare them and estimate their value for the question in hand, and to study their thoughts and feelings in the same way as other historians. He has no special calculus of his own distinct from the usual methods of historical criticism, for the divine guidance we are bound to confess in all history does not make that of the visible Church an enchanted ground on which we are dispensed from the laws of evidence and common sense. On the other hand, belief in the Gospel is no more a prejudice than unbelief. The most complete devotion to Christ our Saviour as the supreme and final guide of life, the deepest conviction of the transcendent importance of the Gospel as the clue to all history, need not hinder our confession that its working in the world is subject to the common laws of God in history and nature. And if some historians in all ages are unworthy of their high calling, it does not follow that Church history is made up of idle tales. If the Lives of the saints are not pure truth, neither are the letters of the diplomatists; yet political history is not therefore summarily condemned by reasonable men.

The difficulties of the subject are the usual difficulties of historical study. The materials are often scanty or of bad quality. For example, Christian literature before the Nicene age belongs

chiefly to the period 180-260, so that contemporary information is scanty for the subapostolic age and for the last forty years of the third century. Many men have to be judged like Marcion from the accounts of their enemies; and great subjects are often obscure, like the common life of common Christians in the second century, or the early history of the Churches in Spain and Britain, or even in Rome and Africa. In general, however, the materials of ecclesiastical history compare fairly well with those of secular. Of course their quality varies. One writer is inaccurate, another is too fond of gossip, another is full of prejudice. Church writers differ in value much like others; and if none of them in the early period come up to the high level of Tacitus or Ammianus, there is still a vast range downward from the impartial good sense of Socrates and the accurate learning of Eusebius and Irenæus to the romances of the Clementines and the stupid blundering of Epiphanius. But we shall not ourselves meet the worst of these difficulties, for every Christian writer of the first three centuries appears to be quite truthful and at least fairly intelligent. At worst, the difficulties are those familiar to the secular historian. The Christians had no monopoly of credulity and prejudice, nor were they the only exhibitors of relics and purveyors of romance and superstition. If Clement believes in the Phœnix, so does Tacitus; and the romance of Leucius Charinus, *discipulus diaboli*, is equal to that of Philostratus. Relic for relic, the true cross is as good as the staff of Agamemnon, and the bones of a saint may be as authentic as the bones of Pelops which Pausanias found at Olympia. Eusebius is vastly better than the writers of the *Historia*

Augusta, and even the lives of the hermits are quite as edifying as the *Golden Ass* of Apuleius, besides being rather more decent. The superiority, both literary and critical, is altogether on the Christian side when the age of Tacitus is past, and the standard remains at a fairly high level for the next three centuries. The Christians wrote not for the drawing-room cliques, but because they had something to say. Not one of them piles up blunders like Solinus, or catalogues omens with the omnivorous credulity of the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*. It is mere prejudice if we let a few bad mistakes conceal from us the generally sound criticism of men like Irenæus and Eusebius. When Irenæus is discussing the origin of the Gospels, he sees exactly what he has to prove, and goes to work in the right way to prove it. Origen in his reply to Celsus throws out modern thoughts, and brings us into the thick of modern objections to the Resurrection. Eusebius has a broader conception of history than Polybius, and all antiquity can shew no finer piece of criticism than the discussion of the authorship of the Apocalypse by Dionysius of Alexandria. The charge of stupid uncriticism against such writers as these only recoils on its authors. However, the historian knows how to deal with unsatisfactory authorities. He can detect forgery, allow for prejudice, and trace out inaccuracy by comparison, and in this way generally comes to a fairly certain conclusion. If the Church historian is willing to use the same method with the same diligence and impartiality, there is no reason why his results should not be equally definite and certain.

But the Catholic (Roman and Anglo-) writers are

not the only sinners against history, though they are much the worst. The perversions of the Protestants were less serious, and we are now in more danger of slighting the truth they stand for than of being led away by them. The other main attack is from the side of scepticism. By far the strongest blow yet struck at Christianity is Lessing's *dictum*, that events of time cannot prove eternal truth. Its tone of reverence for the eternal contrasts well with the vulgar clap-trap of, Miracles do not happen now, and attracts a more serious class of thinkers; yet it is at bottom no better logic than the other. It of course carries a direct denial of the claim which the Gospel makes to be a revelation of eternal truth through certain events of time; but its own validity depends on the substantially atheistic assumption that there is no God who guides the course of such events. Without this assumption the *dictum* falls to the ground at once, for if such a God exists, this guidance must reflect his character, so that events of time cannot but reveal eternal truth; and if the existence of such a God is uncertain, the *dictum* will be uncertain too. And if we make the atheistic assumption, the Gospel will not be an alleged fact disproved by the *dictum*, but an idea ruled out *in limine* as unlawful, so that any attempt to disprove it by the *dictum* is an argument in a circle.

It would be absurd to say that all who accept Lessing's *dictum* deliberately make this assumption; but they deal with history in a way which cannot be justified without it, and in a way which leads to no little misunderstanding. True, it is not a systematic endeavour to force facts into accordance with a false theory—to make "history give place to

dogma." Put in its broadest, and what we may ask leave to call its most insolent form, Lessing's *dictum* becomes, Philosophy ignores history. The philosopher, that is to say, will not distort history like the dogmatist, but simply set it aside. *Qua* philosopher, it is quite true, he has nothing to do with it. Unfortunately, philosophers cannot always limit themselves to the study of philosophy; and, when they come down to mere events of time, this maxim brings them into difficulties at once. If there be such a thing as divine guidance in history its traces may be obscure, but we shall be on safe ground so far as we are able to follow them. We may make mistakes, but we shall do no worse, whereas, if we ignore such guidance, we shall be working on a false principle. No order will then be possible but a logical development working by necessity, and we shall be tempted to undervalue the decisive action of personal character in history, from Jesus of Nazareth downward, to force on its events a meaning predetermined by our logical theory, and to see in its documents no more than a series of literary problems to be discussed with little or no regard to the probabilities of human nature. These temptations may be studied at large in many schools of history, and most conveniently in some of those which are most anxious to claim for themselves the name of Critical.

1. Authorities

(*a*) Collections: Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*; Otto, *Corpus Apologetarum*; Vienna Corpus for Latin Writers; Berlin Corpus for Greek Writers; Ante-Nicene Christian Library for English translations. (*b*) Selections: Gwatkin, *Selections*; Preuschen, *Analecta*; Gebhardt, *Acta Martyrum Selecta*; Lietzmann's *Materials* (English Editions of most). (*c*) Dictionaries: *Dict. of Chr. Biography; Dict. of Chr. Antiquities; Realencyclopädie für prot. Theologie.*

2. Books covering the Whole Period, or a Large Part of It

(* is prefixed to foreign works which have been translated.)

(*a*) General Histories: Tillemont, Gibbon (Bury's Edition), Schiller, *Kaisergeschichte*; *Neander, Müller, Rainy, Möller, (by v. Schubert, Tübingen, 1902—much the best), *Sohm, *KG. im Grundriss*—brilliant sketch. (*b*) Literature: Harnack, *Altchr. Litteratur* (much the fullest); *Krüger, *Bardenhewer, *Patrologie*; Cruttwell (excellent); Ebert and *Teuffel (Schwabe) (Latin writers only); Swete (introductory handbook). (*c*) Doctrine: *Dorner, *Person of Christ*; *Harnack, *Dogmengeschichte*; Loofs, *Leitfaden*; Bethune Baker. (*d*) Chronology: Clinton, Haenel, *Corpus Legum*: also Weingarten, *Zeittafeln*, and Goyau, *Chronologie de l'empire romain*, Paris 1891, will be found useful.

CHAPTER II

THE DECAY OF ANCIENT RELIGION

CHRIST our Saviour did not come down from heaven suddenly. Ages of ages were needed to make ready for the Gospel, and the slow course of centuries is only now beginning to reveal the unimagined fulness of its meaning. Obscure as its beginnings were, it soon became the guiding force in history. It overcame the Empire, it subdued the northern nations, and its present supremacy in the civilized world is hardly questioned. Of serious men who reject its claims, few dispute the surpassing excellence of its moral teaching, and fewer still deny that it has been and still remains by far the mightiest of historic influences on the thoughts and acts of men. Somehow or other, modern history radiates as visibly from Jesus of Nazareth as ancient history converges on Him. Explain it as we may, something came into the world with Him which has caused a revolution of a higher order than the migrations of the nations and the rise and fall of empires. The systems of men may have their day, but the majestic course of ages gathers round that Son of Man who claimed to be Himself the final truth of earth and heaven. Now that the unreasoning assent of past time has given place to noisy questioning, we see that the doubt is

not so much of historical or moral difficulties in the Gospel, as whether it must not be summarily rejected for claiming to be a revelation. But if the powers of unbelief speak louder than they used to do, there is no reason to think them any stronger than they were, and there is no sign yet that they will ever win the battle; and till they have won it, Jesus of Nazareth remains the natural centre of the spiritual development of mankind. Be he the Son of God, or be he "that deceiver," it is hardly possible to deny that He is more and more the Light of the World, and more and more draws all men to Himself.

So far as regards the purely natural circumstances which favoured the spread of Christianity, there is not much room for controversy. The dispersion of the Jews, the decay of ancient worship, and the establishment of the Empire are matters of history. But whatever weight we give to those and such-like facts, it is also matter of history that Christianity was not set on the throne of the world as a matter of course, but had formidable powers arrayed against it, and fought its way through conflicts as arduous as any that history records. It must, therefore, have had some internal source of strength. Some will find this, and not without reason, in its lofty moral teaching, and in the enthusiastic purity and self-devotion of the Christians. True, their purity and self-devotion do explain the matter; but they do not explain it finally. They must have some historic cause themselves, and only one such cause is imaginable. The work of disciples cannot be more than secondary; only personal influence is immediate. It would be a new thing on the face of the earth if mere disciples could have put together in their

massive unity the boldest words that ever fell from human lips, or if Saul of Tarsus could have diverted the enthusiasm of his converts from his own living self to one Jesus who was dead forsooth. This teaching and this self-devotion cannot be anything else than the impress of the Founder's personality. As soon as the Gospel is fairly started, it works under natural law, so that "natural causes" will explain the rest. But "natural causes" will not explain its origin. We believe it is historically certain that Jesus of Nazareth claimed to be in the fullest sense the Son of God; and we accept that claim as true because we cannot refuse it without raising moral dilemmas before which the physical difficulties of the Incarnation and the Resurrection sink to insignificance.

But if the Son of Man came down from heaven, and indeed is ever coming down and ever giving life to the world,[1] He is also the culmination of a long development upon the earth. Two great lines of evolution stand out clear in history. The Jew was trained by a special and progressive revelation through men, while the Gentile was left to work out the general revelation through Nature. In one case as it were, God was seeking man; in the other, man was feeling after God. While the Jew was slowly turned from idols to the God of Israel, and then guided on from the limitations of a nation towards the unity of mankind, the Gentile was led by the majestic order of Nature towards the unity of God: and then in the fulness of time came the Incarnation to consecrate and complete the work of both by revealing the higher unity of God and man in Christ.

[1] John vi. 33.

If neither the one training nor the other was a success in the sense of compelling the unwilling to acknowledge him, each of them did its proper work of enabling true-hearted men to see in him something that more than fulfilled the noblest aspirations of both Jew and Gentile. There is nothing in history more suggestive than the convergence of the best ideals of all nations on that which was real in Jesus of Nazareth.

Beginning with the Jew, we notice that the broad outline of his history is not greatly changed by any serious criticism. First a clan is called out from the idol-worships of Ur of the Chaldees, and flourishes in the midst of the tribes of Canaan. Then the main part of it goes down into Egypt; and when it comes up again a nation is formed on the hills of Canaan, just above and just aside from the great commercial route between Egypt and Assyria which ran along the Philistine coast. Henceforth Israel's history is one long prophecy of a Messiah. It may be that very little of the Law can be traced back to Moses; but even so, he still stands out as the first and greatest of the prophets. The glory of the monarchy, and still more its shortcomings, pointed to a nobler king than David. The fall of Solomon's dominion and the subjection to Assyria opened out a higher mission than that of worldly empire. The hollow prosperity of Jehu's dynasty led the prophets to exchange the violent methods and more than half political leadership of Elijah and Elisha for the spiritual work of teaching a rebellious people: and the opposition they met with gradually brought out the idea of a suffering servant of the Lord. Then the moral gains of the captivity were immense. The destruction of the Temple, the

exile from Jerusalem, the reaction from Babylonish immorality, the purer influence of Persia—all contributed new life and spirituality to the old religion; and the rise of synagogues gave permanence to the result. During the obscure Persian period the idols were forgotten, and the cessation of prophecy left the scribes supreme as teachers of the people. Indeed the Law which they interpreted was the only centre left for the nation's life now that the dispersion had broken up its political unity. Thus the tendency was in Judæa to a stricter and minuter observance of it; in the dispersion to a looser one, and to modes of life much influenced by the ideas of the surrounding heathen. These tendencies were both intensified by the Greek domination. Alexander's conquests and the policy of his successors threw open the Greek world to Jewish settlement, and further scattered the dispersion over all the East. Henceforth Greece began to act on Israel. The Alexandrian translation introduced the Jewish sacred books to the Greek literary world, while the Maccabæan war was needed to check the spread of heathen fashions in Judæa, and further to confirm the supremacy of the Law. Thus Jewish piety was degenerating at home into Pharisaism, and evaporating abroad into a vague monotheism deeply coloured by Greek philosophy. Then came the Romans. If they destroyed the independence of Judæa, they opened the West to Jewish trade, and put an end to the wars of nations which interrupted it. This was the great age of Jewish missionary work, when the church of Israel seemed becoming a light to lighten the Gentiles. But the hard government of Rome and the misconduct of her officials embittered the spirit of the nation. The Pharisee who cased

himself in pride and hatred of the Gentile was the holy man of Israel, and the Barabbas who made insurrection was the idol of the people. Even the Messianic hope became a curse when Israel's mission to be the light of the world was forgotten in fierce longings to see confusion, wrath, and vengeance poured out upon the heathen.

Thus the Jew renounced his duty to the world just when his training for it was completed. The dispersion had antiquated the Law, while the Empire had levelled a clear space for the universalism that was to follow: and this was the time he chose for proclaiming the eternity of the Law, and of the Jewish privilege that was to pass away in its fulfilment. The Gospel was not rejected because Jesus of Nazareth made himself the Messiah—hardly even because he made God His Father. It was not the shock of blasphemy which stirred the deepest hatred of the Pharisee, but his shuddering fear that this strange teaching was no narrow Judaism, but merged the privilege of Israel in the higher revelation of one Father of all men. His choice was made, as soon as the secret which malice had divined within the Saviour's lifetime[1] was proclaimed by Stephen and adopted by St. Paul.

The preparation of the Gentile world was of another sort. The primæval worship of the powers of Nature was expressed in myths whose meaning was half forgotten in very early times. When these personifications were mixed up with various family or tribal worships of ancestors, and the whole was embodied in a rigid system of observances, the result was not such as could permanently satisfy either the reason or the conscience of men. As plays of

[1] John vii. 35. Will he . . . teach the Gentiles?

imagination, the gods of the Vedas or of Homer might be sublime; but Olympus does not overshadow Greece, or even the Himalayas India. Changes came with lapse of time, and were especially promoted by the deepening sense of evil in the East, and by the growth of commerce in the West.

The heathenism then of Greece and Rome was an elaborate system of social observances enforced by the state on grounds of custom or policy, so that it stood outside and above the conscience of individuals. Neither truth and falsehood nor virtue and vice had anything to do with the worship of the gods. It was a mere affair of custom and tradition. To give the gods their due was piety, and knowledge of the ritual was holiness.[1] Public duty or philosophical study might be a school of virtue; but religion was rather the reverse. The gods were of the earth, earthy, and could not raise their worshippers above the earthly passions which enslaved themselves. Their mere number forbade all thought of unity or deeper meaning, whether in nature, in history, or in human life; and no advance was possible till this authoritative polytheism was undermined. For one thing, because the gods were gods of nations and not of mankind, the Greeks laid it down that war is the natural state and noblest work of men: and to the Romans every foreigner was an enemy to whom no duty was owing. Right to the end polytheism caused nothing but hatred for

> Men whom untravelled regions breed,
> And gods unknown uphold;

[1] Cicero *de nat. deor.* i. § 116 est enim pietas justitia adversum deos . . . sanctitas autem scientia colendorum deorum. The context is significant.

till at last the ancient world went down in ruin because the old heathen scorn of the barbarian remained unconquered in the Christian Empire. Again, because the gods were gods of nations and not of men, there was no individual relation to them and no liberty of conscience. If the welfare of the state required the due performance of ancient rites, every individual who chose gods for himself was not only a criminal but a public danger, and no mercy could be shewn him. There was no advance in toleration when Rome identified the gods of Greece with her own, or even when she gradually received the gods of all the conquered nations in her vast pantheon. The state might authorize new worships, but the individual was as much as ever forbidden to go outside the legal list. Besides this, religion was in no sense a moral power. It was not in his own right that a man addressed the gods, but only as a member of the nation or the family; and if the ceremonies he used came down from a hoary antiquity, they had commonly lost their meaning on the way. At any rate, his duty ended with the requirements of the state, and his religion supplied nothing to check the vilest passions. Augustus, Domitian and El Gabal were genuinely religious men, and Tacitus would have forgiven almost anything to Nero sooner than his fiddling.

Undermined the old religion was, and deeply, long before the Christian era, by the influences of Greek philosophy and Roman law. Unlike the heterogeneous kingdoms of Asia, which were only held together by the brute force of a Sennacherib or a Xerxes, the empire of Athens consisted of Greek cities drawn together by a common danger, and

largely kept in union by their own interests. The growth of commerce broke down the isolation of local religions, for the "heroes of Marathon" were out of date when men from the ends of the earth were jostling their beliefs together in the streets of Athens. The irreverence of Sophists and comedians and the deification of living men from Lysander onward shew the unsettlement of old opinions, and the increasing confusion of the Hellenic state-system after the Peloponnesian War loosened the connection of religion with politics. Plato's dreams of a God and Father of this universe, of a future life, and of a republic of wise men gathered from every nation under heaven rise far above the narrowness of ancient custom; and if Aristotle's cold logic was able to shew that they were no more than dreams, it was too late for him to fall back upon the belief of Euripides, that the Greek has a natural right to rule the barbarian. When Alexander pushed forward the frontier of Greek civilization from the Bosphorus to the edge of the Indian desert, he also laid open Greece itself to the influence of the unchanging East, where "Amurath an Amurath succeeds," and man seems lost between a sky of brass above his head, and boundless plains beneath his feet. With Alexander's retreat from the Sutlej began the long two thousand years of the advance of Asia, checked indeed for centuries, first by the old Rome at the Euphrates, then by the new Rome at Mount Taurus, but never stopped till John Sobieski delivered Vienna from the Turks in 1683. The hopefulness of our own time makes it hard for us to understand the hopeless weariness of the East, where tyrants rise and fall, but tyranny and wrong remain the order of the

world, and to contend with them is to contend with fate. Only Islam in its heroic ages breaks the long monotonous history, for Islam has a living power in its preaching of a God who is at least a God of righteousness. Conquered Persia reacted on Greece as strongly as Greece herself on Rome a couple of centuries later; and the reaction was disastrous in the age of confusion which followed Alexander's death. The Oriental dualism of good and evil is a confession of failure and despair, which renounces as insoluble the moral problem of the universe, and gives this world over to the powers of evil as their rightful prey. It quenched at once the hopefulness of Greece, it poisoned centuries of Christian life with contempt of God's creation, and even now we have enough of it to make us blind to the glory which fills earth as well as heaven. As the older systems died away, the Stoics and the Epicureans divided the schools between them, for Sceptics were few. Of these the Epicureans endeavoured to keep up in evil times the old Greek search for pleasure, while Stoic morality is deeply marked by Eastern influences. The spirit of the age reveals itself in their agreement, which shews how far the world had drifted since Herodotus had told his pleasant stories. Their thought was not now of nations and their gods, but of human duty. Even physical speculation yielded more and more to the paramount claim of ethics. The gods were not denied or insulted, but respectfully moved out of the way to a mysterious region of serenity beyond the reach of prayer. If there be a God who is not asleep, he must be far away from the miseries of the earth. The Stoic indeed made the divine the immanent principle of reason in the world;

but then he identified it with Fate, and he so utterly failed to shew the reasonableness of the things in the world that his doctrine seemed a *reductio ad absurdum* of divine immanence.

Meanwhile, the one pressing question was of human duty; and its answer was found in "conformity to nature," as explained by the general agreement of men. In thus appealing from nations to mankind, the Stoic was as much a citizen of the world as the Epicurean. But along with the despair of the East he had a stern and mournful earnestness which bade him fight the good fight of virtue in an evil world, without the Christian's sure and certain hope of victory. No grace from heaven could be looked for if the contest grew too hard for him, but he might quit the stage of life with dignity. "The door was open." So Stoicism had a natural attraction for the nobler spirits of Roman society in an age of revolution, whose sickness was beyond the power of Divus Julius himself to cure. It might in Cato resist the Empire to the death, or it might redeem the weakness of an imperial minister like Seneca; it might in Epictetus preach the quiet life of a contented philosopher, or it might wear for once the purple of its last and perhaps its noblest representative, the Emperor Marcus. But in every case its animating spirit was a calm unbending pride of duty, hardly more contrary to lawless vice than to that loving humility of the Christians which even Marcus mentions but once, and then only to dismiss it as unworthy "obstinacy." If the Stoic had a good deal in common with the Christian, he was not likely to find it out.

With all its grandeur, Stoicism was full of weak-

ness. Whatever it might be to the chosen few, there was no help for the world in a morality of detachment from the world and denial of human feeling. The Stoic knew nothing of a Father in heaven who guides the merciless laws of Fate in mercy, nothing of a guilt of sin for ever done away, nothing of a family of God to hallow human fellowship, and therefore nothing of a gift in Christ of life eternal for wise and unwise. All these ideas were meaningless to him. Worst of all, Stoicism had no sanction. It was hardly more than "Zeno thought on this wise," for no philosophy can make the authoritative appeal of the historic revelation to the example and command of one who is both Son of God and Son of Man. It was not the mission of Greek philosophy to give new life to the world, but to weaken the old national polytheisms by declaring the sovereign claim of universal duty; and it is the glory of the Stoics that they recognized in the service of duty the royal dignity of man.

Roman jurisprudence was another great influence which helped to weaken the old national religions. Though the old Quiritarian law was as narrow and as formal as the old Quiritarian religion, the *jus gentium* administered to strangers by the *praetor peregrinus* was devised for practical purposes, and therefore freer from the bondage of unreasoned custom. It was not the law of any particular nation, but a rough average of the customs of all the neighbouring nations; and the process of striking off the peculiarities of each of them was denoted by the word *aequitas*—levelling. As province after province was added to the republic, the domain of the *jus gentium* was extended further and further.

Meanwhile Rome came in contact with Greece, and found the philosophers preaching a Law of Nature, and seeking it in a rough average of the moral beliefs of many peoples, made without regard to the peculiarities of any of them. The two processes were similar, and their results were easily identified. So the *jus gentium* became the Law of Nature, and from the mere levelling of *aequitas* was developed the idea of equity—a higher right to which the enactment and interpretation of positive law must be as nearly as possible conformed. No man conceived more worthily than the Roman lawyer the grandeur of the work which the Empire was doing for the world; yet for that very reason he was in alliance with the Stoic against its arbitrary tendencies, while his veneration for equity gave him a point of contact even with the Christians. It was not his mission to give new life to the world, but to loosen the tyranny of national religions by proclaiming an empire of right and equity above them all; and it is the glory of the Roman lawyers that they did so much to reform the iniquities that had come down from the immemorial past.

Alongside of Greek philosophy and Roman law there was a third influence already working in the time of Augustus, but not fully developed till the second and third centuries. What was lost to the old gods was not all of it lost to religion, for some earnest men and women (and many runners after spiritual excitement) sought consolation in the warmer worships of the East, and became votaries of Isis, Mithras, and the rest. These worships were sundry; but they have a common element which makes them a sort of bridge from the old religions to Christianity.

In the first place, they were universal religions which received all comers, though without requiring them like Israel to renounce their idols. Mithras was not a jealous god. They were also priestly religions with a regular clergy, and contrast well even with Judaism in making spiritual counsel a part of the priest's proper duty. For they had in them a true moral element—a thing in which the old Roman religion was as utterly wanting as the lowest fetishism. They spoke as no Western worships did speak, of a holiness that was not formal, of a purity that was not ceremonial, of a contest with sin in this world, of a life after death which might be won by all that strove worthily to win it, and of a reward for the righteous, not down among the Elysian shades, but aloft in the empyrean with the gods. True it is that these Eastern worships were deeply stained with superstition and frivolity, with impostures and revolting rites, and sometimes with the vilest immoralities; and even where they rose highest they fell infinitely short of Christianity. But all this notwithstanding, they did give some satisfaction to the deep religious cravings of human nature which the old worships ignored; and we cannot doubt that some found in them a real help to a truer and purer life.

To sum up generally. At first view, the ancient world was a failure. As St. Paul tells us, Jew and Gentile had both been tried, and both had fallen short. Neither revelation nor philosophy had been able to cleanse the hearts of men and overcome their hatred of their fellow-men; and all the glory of Augustus cannot hide his utter failure to find a cure for the evils under which society was slowly perishing. Yet in a deeper sense God's training of the ancient nations

was not a failure. As St. Paul tells us again, Christ came in the fulness of time. The passing of the Empires had brought a great advance in the conception of holiness, the idea of duty, the claim of equity, the model of worship; and the Empire itself, the *pis aller* of the ancient world, had many a germ of better things which it was too weak to ripen without help more potent than the old society could give. The children were come to the birth, but there was not strength to bring forth. As Greek philosophy worked out the universality of duty, and Roman jurisprudence that of equity, so the political and economic changes of the last two or three centuries before Christ had swept away the old barriers which kept the nations apart. Materially as well as morally, the Empire prepared the way for the Gospel. Even the worship of the emperor, which proved the chief hindrance to the spread of Christianity, was itself a chief expression of the craving for something higher than customary and national worships. Now that the revelation to the Jews had shewn that God is holy, and the searching of the Gentiles had shewn that man is made for holiness, the time was come for the incarnate Word to realize on earth something still higher than holiness, and round himself to gather into unity the scattered children of God.

But our Lord's was not the only effort to heal the sickness of society. The statesmen, too, had seen the problem, and were endeavouring to solve it in another way. Side by side with the Universal Family rose the imposing structure of the Universal Empire, the last and mightiest effort of the ancient world.

CHAPTER III

THE ROMAN EMPIRE

In early Christian times the Roman Empire was the one great power of the world. It included everything between the Euphrates, the Danube, the Rhine, the Atlantic, and the northern edge of the African desert. The Mediterranean was a Roman lake. Athens and Alexandria, Marseille and Carthage, Jerusalem and Cordova lay far inside this vast expanse of country. The Roman eagles glittered on the walls of Trebizond, by the cataracts of the Nile, and on the shores of Boulogne, and a few years later in the defiles of the Carpathians and on the towers of Carlisle; and a victorious campaign might carry them to Inverness or Dongola, to the banks of the Elbe, or the mouth of the Tigris. It was no vain boast of Roman pride, that the Empire was the world. "There went forth a degree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed." The wild tribes of Germany were no more rivals to the Empire than the Afghans are to England. Even Parthia was no match for Rome, though the King of Kings could muster horsemen from the Euphrates to the Indus. She might snatch a victory when the Roman army of Syria was demoralized with luxury; but a little help from the legions of the Danube was always

enough to check her. Still further eastward, belonging almost to another world, was the great and conquering power of China. But Rome and China never came in contact, though for a moment (A.D. 94) they stood face to face across the Caspian.

Rome was not built in a day, nor her Empire in a generation. In remote ages the stern discipline and skilful policy of the old republic laid a solid foundation for her power. The Etruscan and the Latin, the Samnite and the Gaul went down before her; and when her last great enemy was overcome in Hannibal (202 B.C.), the world was at her feet. City by city, province by province, kingdom by kingdom she gathered in her spoil. Her allies sank into clients and her clients into subjects. Thus Israel was made an ally of Rome by Judas Maccabæus (162 B.C.), and became a client state when Pompeius took Jerusalem (63 B.C.). Rome gave her Herod for a king (37 B.C.), and subjected Judæa to a Roman governor at the exile of Archelaus (A.D. 6). And now, though free cities like Athens might survive, though client princes like the Herods might be suffered to remain, Roman influence was everywhere supreme. The world had settled down to its subjection, and the Empire already seemed an ordinance of nature. Rome never feared provincial disaffection. She massed her legions on the frontiers, and whole provinces were bared of soldiers. The Gauls "obeyed twelve hundred soldiers," and a few lictors were enough to keep the peace of Asia. If the riot at Ephesus (Acts xix.) had become serious, there were no regular troops worth mention much nearer than the Euphrates and the Danube. The Roman peace replaced the wars of nations, and revolt was some-

thing unimagined in the Gentile world. Israel was the only rebel. No ambition, no resentment of oppression —nothing but the glowing Messianic hope of Israel had power to overcome the spell of the everlasting Empire.

To the emperor's constitutional power there were hardly any limits beyond the understanding that he was to govern by law, and that he was not to be called a king in Rome or to wear the diadem of an eastern sultan. His ensigns were the sword of a Roman general, the lictors of a Roman consul. Augustus maintained the forms of the republic, and affected to live as a simple senator among his equals. But he was none the less their master. He sat between the consuls in the senate, and the opinion he gave before the rest was seldom disputed, unless it were by some skilful flatterer. He recommended candidates to the people and practically appointed all officials. He was commander of the army and head of the state religion. He could obtain from the senate what laws he pleased, or (in most cases) issue orders of his own. Above all he held the powers of a tribune, which not only made his person sacred, but enabled him to forbid any official act at his discretion. The forms of monarchy soon gathered round its substance. Tiberius reduced the popular elections to a form, and established a camp of prætorian guards just outside the city. Cæsar's household was counted by thousands of all ranks, scattered through the Empire. His tribunician veto was exercised in a regular court, and every Roman citizen might appeal unto Cæsar. His tribunician sacredness was lost in a halo of divinity, for the emperor was a god on earth, and his worship the most real part of the

state religion, notwithstanding ridiculous deifications like those of Claudius and of Poppæa's infant. It was organized all over the Empire, and the oath by Cæsar's Genius was the test of true allegiance. Altars were built to Augustus in his lifetime, and most of his successors till past the time of Constantine were formally enrolled among the gods at death.

Augustus and the senate professed to divide between them the care of the Empire. Provinces like Syria, which needed a military force, were governed by Cæsar's legates; while quiet countries like Cyprus and Achaia, where no legions were stationed, would be left to the administration of proconsuls. All, however, took their instructions from the emperor, and were equally controlled by him. Cæsar had also procurators or financial agents in all the provinces, and in some unsettled districts like Judæa these procurators had the full power of legates, subject to some check from the next governor of a province—in this case Syria. These powers included civil and military jurisdiction. Pilate for example had "power to crucify, and power to release," and the Jews could not carry out a capital sentence without his permission. Unlike proconsuls and legates, who were always senators, the procurators were men of lower rank. Felix was the brother of Pallas, the freedman and favourite of Claudius. "Husband of three queens," he "used the power of a king in the spirit of a slave."

The Empire was defended by five-and-twenty legions soon increased to thirty, each consisting of nearly 7000 men (cavalry included), with an equal number of auxiliaries. The Prætorian Guards were 10,000, and there were some unattached cohorts.

Thus the regular army of Augustus was about 350,000 men—a small force for a population of perhaps eighty or ninety millions. The legion was divided into ten cohorts, each under its military tribune, and in most cases about 500 strong. One such cohort was stationed in Jerusalem at the Tower of Antonia, from which a flight of steps commanded the temple area. From these steps the tribune, Claudius Lysias, allowed St. Paul to address the multitude after his arrest. The whole cohort was employed to seize our Lord in order to make resistance hopeless. Under each tribune were six centurions so that each centurion had under him nearly 100 soldiers. All the centurions mentioned in the New Testament are favourable specimens of Roman military virtue. It will be enough to name Cornelius, Julius, and the nameless officer who watched by the cross. Yet another (Lu. vii. 9) won from the Lord a warm approval by his soldierly conception of him as the *imperator* of the host of heaven.

The colonies of Rome did nearly as much as the legions to secure her dominion. They were not countries like modern colonies, but cities. Many of them were founded for military purposes, to command an important road or overawe a disaffected population. Among these were Carthage, founded by Caius Gracchus (122 B.C.), Corinth by Julius Cæsar (46 B.C.), Philippi by Augustus, Cæsarea by Vespasian. These three were old cities, though Corinth and Carthage had lain in ruins since their destruction by Mummius and Scipio (146 B.C.), and their "foundation" means no more than the despatch of a number of Roman veterans with a new constitution. The colonies were miniatures of Rome herself.

They had their prætors (*duoviri juri dicundo*) like the Roman consuls, and attended like them by lictors. Municipal affairs were managed by these prætors and the curiales, who answered to the Roman senators. The two prætors at Philippi (Acts xvi.) contrast strongly with the seven politarchs (Acts xvii. 6) of the Greek city of Thessalonica.

As the Empire was built on the ruins of many nations, there was a great variety of peoples within its limits. Broadly speaking, the eastern half was Greek, the western Latin. Italy and Carthage lie on one side of the dividing line, Greece and Cyrene on the other. But this is only a rough statement. In the first place, Greek was known to every educated person in the Empire, and far eastward too towards Babylon, whereas Latin outside its proper region was only the language of officials and soldiers. Moreover, Greek was spread over some parts even of the West. Sicily and southern Italy were full of Greek settlements, and the great colony of Massilia had largely Hellenized the valley of the Rhone. Greek was indeed the language of commerce everywhere. In the third place, Greek was more fully dominant in the East than Latin in the West. No other language was spoken in Greece itself and Macedonia, on the islands and round the coast of Asia inside Taurus. It was only among the Lycaonian mountains that St. Paul's Greek was not enough. A Gaulish language was spoken in Galatia, but even the Galatian gave his sons Greek names. They did not always speak Greek, any more than Williams the Welshman always speaks English; but the Greek language was fast supplanting the Gaulish, though there was a strong provincial spirit in these regions, as we see from the history of

Montanus and Marcellus. And if Greek civilization was not quite supreme even in Asia, it had tougher rivals in Egypt and Syria. Alexandria indeed was mostly Greek, but the common people of Egypt held to their Coptic. Syriac also shewed few signs of disappearance. In Palestine the Greek element was mostly along the coast and in the Decapolis, though it was also strong in Galilee. Now Latin in the West had scarcely yet supplanted the rustic languages. Phœnician still flourished in the streets of Carthage; and though Latin culture had made a good beginning in Gaul and Spain, there was still much work to be done. The conquest of Britain was not seriously attempted till the time of Claudius (A.D. 43), and the country was never fully Latinized.

The Greeks were the intellectual masters of the Empire, and divided much of its trade with the Jews. Greece itself indeed was in a deplorable state. Its population had been declining for the last five centuries, and was now a very thin one. Archidamus (431 B.C.) led nearly 100,000 Peloponnesians into Attica, but all Greece (280 B.C.) could muster only 20,000 men to hold Thermopylæ against the Gauls, and in the second century A.D. Plutarch doubts whether even 3000 heavy-armed citizen soldiers could be assembled from Peloponnesus. There were no cities of any size but the Roman colonies of Corinth and Nicopolis. Sparta and Thebes were insignificant, and even Athens was only a venerable shadow of her former self. In some respects, indeed, she was little changed. She still had her Acropolis as full of statues as it could hold (Acts xvii. 16). Her gods were more in number than her men. Pallas Athene still watched, lance in hand, over her beloved city, and her colossal

figure was a landmark for miles out at sea. The venerable court of Areopagus still met on Mars' Hill to watch over the religion of the citizens, and the mysteries of Eleusis were the most respected in the Empire. The people seemed to govern Athens as of old, for she was still in name a free city. She had usually joined the losing side in war, and suffered heavily in the siege by Sulla, when the groves of the Academy were cut down. Yet Rome always treated her with studious respect, and on a formal footing of alliance and equality. But the old spirit of freedom was utterly extinct. The Athenians had sunk into a people of gossips and flatterers, whose chief political activity was in erecting statues to their benefactors.

Philosophy, however, still flourished at Athens. If she was no longer the one great light of the Greek world, she was quite equal to Rhodes or Tarsus, and in the first century superior to Alexandria. The Lyceum and the Academy still recalled the memory of Aristotle and Plato. But Stoics and Epicureans were now the chief schools. They both sprang up in the iron age of Alexander's successors, and bear the mark of its despair. They contrast as we have seen with earlier Greek thought: but to the Gospel they were equally opposed. They resented its lofty claim to be the revelation of the truth which they were wrangling over. But their criticism of its doctrines came from different points of view. The ideas, for example, of a God and Father in heaven and of the personal action of a Son of God among men were equally offensive to the Stoic with his pantheistic fatalism, and to the Epicurean who saw no need of gods at all, or in any case of gods who meddle with the world. The humility and tenderness of Christianity was

equally opposed to the self-sufficing pride of the Stoic, and to the Epicurean's ideal of refined and tranquil pleasure. The resurrection of the dead is equally absurd, whether the soul is corporeal as the Stoics held, or whether it is nothing without the body—which was the Epicurean theory. The schools were not at their best in the apostolic age, for Athens was rather under a cloud. But such as they were, they fairly represent the best heathen thought of the time.

Greece itself, however, formed but a small part of the Greek world. Even in the sixth century before Christ her colonies bade fair to establish her supremacy in Asia and Italy: and though their growth was checked by Persia and Carthage, they still commanded a vast extent of coast. They covered the entire shore of the Ægean and the islands as far as Cyprus, fringed the Black Sea more than half-way round, and even touched the coast of Africa. Sebastopol is on the site of one colony; Cyrene was another. The larger part of Sicily was Greek; so also much of the coast of Italy south of Naples. Further west was the great colony of Marseille, which became a centre of Greek influence along the eastern coast of Spain and up the valley of the Rhone. But the greatest victories of Greece (like those of Rome) were won in the age of her decay. Macedonia was her conqueror indeed, but the disciple and protector of Greek culture. The main results of Alexander's conquests was the spread of Greek civilization in three successive regions outward into Asia. The country inside Mount Taurus became in course of time thoroughly Greek, and remained so till the eleventh century. In Syria and Egypt Greek influences became dominant, but the native forces were never

fully overcome. They survived the overthrow of the Greek power by the Saracens. Further Asia was never seriously Hellenized; yet the Greeks were strong in Mesopotamia till Julian's time (A.D. 363), and Greek kings reigned on the edge of the Indian desert for two hundred years. But Greek influence beyond the Tigris was mostly destroyed in the third century B.C. by the rise of Parthia.

Rome was another disciple of Greece, and an even mightier protector of Greek civilization than Macedonia. In the West she destroyed the old enemy Carthage, in the East she checked the advance of Parthia at the Euphrates, so that Greek influences had free scope in all the space between. Rome and Greece never were rivals. Each was supreme in its own sphere. Greece obeyed the government of Rome, while Rome looked up to Greek philosophy. She looked down, it is true, on Greek trade; but for that very reason she let it alone. The two civilizations were in close alliance. Greek literary fashions were so eagerly taken up at Rome in the second century B.C. that the native growth was quite obscured. Roman literature imitates Greek models, Roman philosophy echoes the Greek. Only law was purely Roman. The educated Roman wrote and talked and laughed in Greek as freely as in Latin. Nor is this surprising, for he learned Greek in early youth, and studied under Greek teachers till he could attend the schools of Rhodes or Athens. It is needless to add that Roman literature was not similarly studied by the Greeks. Yet they tacitly recognized the equality of Rome when they abstained from calling her barbarian.

Scattered through the Empire and far beyond its

eastern frontier were the Jews. Their dispersion was already old, for the successive deportations of Tiglath-Pileser and Sargon, of Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar had removed the larger part of the nation to Assyria and Babylon. And though many of these eastern Jews may have been lost among the heathens round them, there were still great numbers living among the Parthians and Medes and Elamites. But the great dispersion still further eastward was of later date, when Alexander's conquests had opened Asia almost as much to Jewish as to Greek influences. In Christian times they were counted by myriads in the Euphrates valley, grouped round the strongholds of Nisibis and Nehardea. They abounded in Babylonia, and fought with the Greeks in bloody riots in the streets of Seleucia, almost in the presence of the King of kings. Henceforth Jewish settlements were free to follow the lines of trade, and the commercial genius of Israel found scope abroad instead of struggling with the Law at home.

They were naturally most numerous in Syria, where they formed a large element of the population, especially in cities like Damascus, Antioch, or Tarsus. They were hardly less at home beyond Mount Taurus, from Lycaonia and Galatia to Pontus. Their inscriptions are found even in the Crimea. Further west they had stronger rivals, for the Greeks were a commercial people too, and better sailors than the Jews. Yet St. Paul goes from synagogue to synagogue at Ephesus, Thessalonica, Berœa, Athens, and Corinth, and Philo speaks of Jews in all parts of Greece, including the islands. Cyprus was the home of Barnabas, and Titus had to deal with Jews in Crete. Cyrene was another great resort of theirs. Simon of

Cyrene carried the cross, and Lucius was among the prophets and teachers at Antioch.

But the most important Jewish colony in the Greek world was at Alexandria, with offshoots in Egypt generally. Alexander himself brought them to the city, and the earlier Ptolemies encouraged them to settle in it. Two of its wards were chiefly peopled by Jews, and they were not wanting in the other three. They contributed much to the trade, and something to the disorders of the city. Some of them rose to the highest offices in the state. Philo estimates the whole number of Jews in Egypt at not less than a million. At Leontopolis (somewhere between Memphis and Pelusium) they had a small temple of their own in imitation of Jerusalem, built about 160 B.C. by Onias, a son of one of the last high priests of the older line of Aaron before the Maccabees. It had a local reputation till its closure by the Romans (A.D. 73).

Though the Jews were less at home in the Latin half of the Empire, they were not wanting even there. They were especially numerous in Rome itself. The prisoners brought to the city by Pompeius (63 B.C.) were very unprofitable servants, so that they soon obtained their liberty, and formed a Jewish quarter in the unfashionable district beyond the Tiber. Julius Cæsar treated them with special favour, and by the time of Augustus they were counted in Rome by thousands. They were far from welcome settlers. Jewish beggars and noisy costermongers were the plague of the streets, and even the temples were not sacred from their pilferings. As money-changers and shopkeepers they throve unpleasantly well, and in every occupation they ran the Gentiles close. The

Jew was even better than the Greek at fortune-telling and imposture generally. So, between disgust and fear and envy, the populace of Rome was as ready as any Vienna mob to hunt out the Jews. The emperors more than once expelled them from the city, but they always returned. One of these expulsions was by Claudius (*cir.* A.D. 53); and Suetonius tells us that it was on account of "their repeated riots at the instigation of Chrestus"—which may be a confused way of saying that they had troubles either with the Christians or about some false Messiah. However, the edict came to nothing. In the next reign they found a steady friend in Nero's wife Poppæa. Even the destruction of Jerusalem scarcely endangered the toleration of the Jews at Rome. Josephus and Agrippa II. lived in favour with Vespasian, and Agrippa's sister Berenice won the heart of the destroyer Titus, though Roman pride forbade him to give the world a Jewish empress.

The outward and visible sign of a Jewish community was the synagogue. The Law made little provision for religious instruction, and none at all for public worship elsewhere than at the Temple. Something was done by the prophets to supply the need; but after the captivity it was more effectually dealt with by the synagogue. The new system was already old in the apostolic age, and the dispersion carried it everywhere. The synagogues were numerous. Though we need not believe the Rabbinic story that there were 480 in Jerusalem, there were certainly a good many. The later rule for smaller places required a synagogue to be built wherever there were ten Jews who could attend it. The general government of the community was vested in a court of elders, who seem

to have had the power of exclusion from the society, and certainly inflicted minor punishments on their countrymen for breaches of Jewish order. The synagogue, however, was not subject to them, but had its own officials—the ruler or rulers, for there were sometimes more than one who had the general oversight of the services; the collectors of the alms; the "minister,"[1] or verger. It must be noted that there was neither priest nor minister in the proper sense attached to the synagogue. The rulers were more like the kirk elders in Scotland. The service began with the *Shema*, which consisted of the three paragraphs, Deut. vi. 4-9 (*Hear*, O Israel), xi. 13-21, and Num. xv. 37-41, with certain benedictions before and after it. This confession of faith was followed by the *Shemoneh Esreh*, or *Eighteen* prayers and thanksgivings. Next came a lesson from the Law, which for this purpose was divided into 154 sections, that it might be read through in three years. The modern Jews have fifty-four sections, and read it in one year. Then came a lesson from the Prophets, who in the Hebrew Canon include Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings, but not Daniel. These portions, however, were not continuous like those of the Law. They were commonly selected with some reference to what had been read before. Thus Gen. i. is now followed by Isa. xlii., Deut. i. by Isa. i. Next followed the sermon, on the passages just read. Last of all came the Blessing. If a priest happened to be present, he pronounced it, as the bishop does with us; if not, it was turned into a prayer. With this honorary exception, the entire service was performed by ordinary members of the congregation, called up for

[1] Luke iv. 20.

the purpose at the ruler's discretion. Thus our Lord stands up to read the lesson in the synagogue at Nazareth, and sits down to preach on it; and at Antioch in Pisidia the rulers send to Paul and Barnabas as distinguished strangers to ask them for a sermon.

The synagogue was not confined to native Israelites. Judaism was an aggressive faith. Even in Palestine the Pharisees "compassed sea and land to make a single proselyte"; and the foreign Jews were still more zealous missionaries. The Jews were an enigma to the world, with their clannish ways, their unaccountable quarrels, their circumcision, their "lazy" sabbath, their clean and unclean meats, their dirty habits and finical attention to ceremonial purity, and (strangest of all) their worship of a God without an image. Though it was well known that Pompeius found no image in the Holy of Holies, rumour placed there a donkey's head, and Tacitus is not ashamed to repeat the lie. But however the Jews might be slandered, they could never be ignored. So much the stronger was the attraction of their lofty monotheism for serious men who felt the emptiness of heathenism. Even Judaism was a light to lighten the Gentiles, revealing in its measure the unknown Supreme, and promising deliverance from sin and sorrow. Thus it had something of the power of the Gospel. There were Gentile proselytes as well as men of Israel in every synagogue. These proselytes were of all ranks upward to the great Roman ladies, the Empress Poppæa, and King Izates of Adiabene beyond the Tigris, who was almost a kingmaker in Parthia. In the New Testament we find among others the treasurer of Queen Candace, Cornelius of Cæsarea,

another centurion at Capernaum and Nicolas of Antioch, who was one of the seven. They were received on easy terms. For the "devout," or "men who feared God," it was enough to renounce idolatry, attend the synagogue, and observe a few conspicuous practices like the sabbath or abstinence from swine's flesh. They were welcome even on this footing. The full observance of the Law was required only from those who asked for full admission to the Church of Israel by the threefold ordinance of circumcision, baptism, and sacrifice. After this they were counted "Israelites in all things."

The rabbis were half proud of their numerous proselytes, half ashamed of "the leprosy of Israel." Indeed the Jews of the dispersion were not strict observers of the Law. Pharisaic precision was less attractive at a distance from Jerusalem, and in fact the Law could not be kept in foreign countries. The Jews of Rome or Babylon could not offer their paschal lambs in the temple, or appear before Jehovah three times in the year. The dispersion was in itself a plain sign that the Law was waxing old and ready to vanish away. The spirit of the foreign Jews was not that of the pedants at Jerusalem, though it varied much in different places. Even Galilee was less narrowly Jewish than Judæa; and further off the Jews were Greeks as well as Jews, speaking Greek and living in the midst of Greek civilization. They read the Law in Greek, and visited the temple as Mohammedans visit the Kaaba, perhaps once or twice in their lives. Jerusalem might be the holy city, but it was not their home. The Law might be ordained of angels, but the worship of the one true God was after all the main thing. Thus the Judaism of the dis-

persion was quite open to the influences of Greek philosophy. They are visible in the Book of Wisdom, and pervade the writings of Philo. Living as he did in the cosmopolitan city of Alexandria, it was natural for him to read the Law in the light of an eclectic philosophy. Absolute submission to its authority was quite consistent with allegorical methods of interpretation which enabled him to find in it whatever he wanted. Thus he makes the just and holy God of Israel into a Supreme like that of the philosophers—pure Being above all attributes and far removed from contact with the world. The Word (Memra) of the Palestinian Jews, through which Jehovah speaks to men, becomes the Logos of Philo —an impersonal and yet personal summing-up of the divine powers, viewed sometimes in the Stoic way as the active reason of the world, sometimes after the Platonic fashion as the archetypal *idea* which shapes all things, and sometimes again as the creative Wisdom. Jewish privilege is almost explained away. The Law is binding because it is pure and good—the original and still the best philosophy. Messiah's reign is an age of virtue, and the believer (or philosopher) of every nation will share the reward of Israel. Such a citizen of the world is Philo, with all his zeal for the Law.

Judæa itself lay well within the sphere of Gentile influences. In three directions it touched the Greek cities of Phœnicia, the Decapolis, and the Philistine coast. But the direct danger from Greek idolatry was averted by the Maccabæan struggle, and its present influence on Israel was rather one of repulsion. Rome and the Herods did the fatal mischief. Herod the Great was indeed a splendid king. With all his

crimes, he rises far above the common type of Eastern sultans. He brought Judæa safely through the dangers of Roman civil war. He watched over the interests of his subjects, made Jerusalem the finest city in the East, and was a tower of strength to the Jews in all countries. The glory of Herod yields only to that of Solomon. Yet the Jews hated him, and with good reason. His policy was heathen throughout his reign. He looked on Israel as one of the nations of the world and nothing more, so that his government was one long defiance of his people. Their pride was trampled down, their deepest convictions outraged by this cursed Edomite, this hideous caricature of the King that was to reign in righteousness. Only the Roman power kept him on the throne. So every discord in the state was inflamed to fever heat. Such Herodian party as existed was drawn from the Sadducees, and headed by the great priestly families like those of Boethus and Annas. The priests were guardians of the Law, and therefore rivals of the scribes, whose traditions were making the Law of none effect. But when they took their stand upon that Law they seemed no better than free-thinkers to a people who cared so much for later growths of doctrine. The Messianic hope, for example, was a subject best avoided at the court of Herod; and the Law has few traces of angels or of personal immortality. Here is one more sign that it was waxing old. Thus the Sadducees were little better than a wealthy and unpopular clique: the nation was divided. Though the Pharisees were rebels in theory, they shrank from the fearful danger of setting the Empire at defiance. Some were timid, some saw in foreign rule the punishment of national sin. Even

an Edomite for king was one step better than a procurator from Rome. As a party, therefore, they preferred the schools to politics. If they could not hope to deliver Israel, they were free to study the Law and the traditions. So they, too, lost influence. The zealots were the men of action. Their sentence was for open war. They kept the nation in a growing ferment with their risings, and ended by drawing it into a struggle of life and death with Rome.

It cannot be said that Rome was a deliberate oppressor. Heavy taxation and bad finance were the faults of her general government, and so far Judæa was not worse off than other provinces. Nor was it her policy to insult the national worship. She treated it with official respect just because it was a national worship, and interfered more than once to protect it in the Greek cities. The cohort in the Tower of Antonia was only there to guard the peace. The sanctity of the Temple was fully recognized. The emperor made regular offerings, and no Gentile was allowed to set foot in the Court of Israel. The Jews had express permission to put to death even a Roman citizen, if he was found inside the "middle wall of partition." Neither was Rome jealous of local freedom. The country was governed as before by the high priest and Sanhedrin, except that capital sentences needed the procurator's confirmation, and every synagogue throughout the Empire retained its private jurisdiction. The procurator could no doubt act for himself when he chose; but without this power he could not be responsible for order. The Jews, moreover, had exceptional privileges like freedom from military service, and from legal business on the sabbath. The high priest could even send Saul of

Tarsus to bring the Christians of Damascus to Jerusalem for punishment. So careful was the Roman government to avoid offence to religion.

It was all in vain. Rome and Israel could never understand each other. What was to be done with a people who were constantly raising wars of religion over the commonest acts of government? Even a census could not be taken without a dangerous rising. Nor was this the worst. Officials are seldom gracious when they have to live among a people they despise and hate. The *publicani* especially, who farmed the taxes, had a direct interest in extortion. Thus, whatever the government might do, the officials were constantly allowing their contempt for the Jews to break out in lawless violence. Pilate's slaughter of the Galileans at their sacrifices is a fair sample of their conduct. Thus Judæa was most unfortunate in its procurators. Few provinces were afflicted with such a series of oppressors as Pilate, Felix, Albinus, and Gessius Florus, the last and worst of the series. Only Festus was a better sort of man.

Even the Empire could not safely oppress the Jews —far less despise them. Israel was as proud as Rome herself. However this world's tyrants might boast, the Jew knew well that God's covenant was with his fathers. The obstinacy which had so long opposed the Law was now enlisted in its defence. Sooner would the whole nation perish than let Pilate bring the idolatrous ensigns of the legions into the city, or allow Caius to place his image in the temple. But it was intolerable that God's own people should be trodden underfoot by "dogs" and "sinners of the Gentiles." Hatred of the Gentiles grew more and more intense. The bitterest taunt against our Lord

was the question whether he meant to go and teach the Gentiles, and the unpardonable sin of his followers was their preaching to the Gentiles. Other nations feared Rome, and admired the universal conqueror: Israel feared too, and hated her the more. And side by side with Pharisaic pride was the Messianic hope: and the Messianic hope was even stronger than the fear of Rome. The old prophets had pointed to the future, to a king of David's line, to the glory of Jehovah resting on him, and to a never-ending reign of peace and righteousness. In some happier times, peradventure those of John Hyrcanus, the writer of the Apocalypse of Enoch had drawn a picture of Messiah not unworthy of his prophetic teachers. But now the nation was thoroughly embittered. Oppression brought the Messianic hope to the front of thought and action. It was not cherished by the zealots only, but by the peasants of Galilee, the scribes at Jerusalem, and the heretics of Sychar—even the Sadducees could not quite renounce it. Philo himself, whose hopes of a reign of virtue are really independent of Messiah, was obliged to give them something of a Messianic form. But oppression also debased the character of the Messianic hope. Some of the simpler minds, especially in Galilee, were still true to the spirit of prophecy. With them the intervention from on high and the salvation from their enemies is only that they may serve the Lord without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of their life. Messiah may even be a light to lighten the Gentiles. But at Jerusalem men hoped rather that when the blow from heaven came, it would give them a vulgar conqueror to break the yoke of Rome and pour out wrath upon the heathen.

Such a perversion of God's crowning promise to mere revenge on men of yesterday simply renounced the call of Israel to be the servant of the Lord, whose sufferings were for the healing of the nations. It was an apostate nation long before the decisive morning of the cry, We have no king but Cæsar.

Though Judæa was a tiny province, the Jews were the greatest people of the East, and no unequal match for Rome herself. The Zealots were right so far. The Law, the temple, and the Messianic hope kept Israel a living nation—the only living nation left inside the Empire. Had the nation been sound, there would have been no need for a miracle to give them the victory. But however the stubborn courage of the Zealots amazed the Roman legions, their savage fanaticism was no bond of union for a nation. All through the apostolic age the storm was gathering which broke in seventy years of internecine struggle between Rome and Israel for the dominion of the East. Our Lord's whole ministry was a warning that there could be no blessing on the violence of the Zealots. No prophet was needed to foresee that the hatred of the Gentile which led them to desecrate the temple needs must also bring the Gentile to destroy it. A nation which is consumed with hatred of its neighbours is ready for destruction. And when the storm had spent its force, and Israel was uprooted from among the nations, then it was seen how truly the Lord had accused the scribes of replacing the Law with a tradition of their own. The obsoleteness of the Law was not a recondite doctrine of the Christians, but a plain fact which any one with eyes could see for himself. Atonement was the very essence of the Law, and atonement

ceased when sacrifice became impossible: yet the religious life of Israel went on almost unchanged. But there were no more Sadducees and no more Zealots; no more proselytes and no more freethinkers. Servility to Rome and armed resistance were alike impossible. Pharisaism remained supreme from the time when Israel went out to his long home of exile.

Books

*Mommsen, *Röm. Gesch.* v.; Bury, *Student's Roman Empire*; Wendland, *Hellen-Röm. Kultur*, Tübingen, 1907; also most of the Introductions to N.T.

CHAPTER IV

THE APOSTOLIC AGE

I

Such was the world into which our Saviour came. It was a brilliant world, in the full splendour of the Augustan age of literature and civilization. The wars of nations were at an end, and civil wars were ended too. Commerce flourished in the quiet of the Roman peace as it had never flourished before, and seemed to gain new life from the treasures of darkness and the hidden wealth of past ages which the Roman wars of conquest had scattered through the world. Never were such splendid shows as those of the Roman amphitheatre, where whole fleets and armies fought before the Roman people. Never had so many subtle brains and skilful fingers ministered to luxury and elegance. Above all, peace and order were guarded by the strong hand of Cæsar and his seven-and-twenty legions. It was strong government to some purpose. No outside enemy could shake the solid might of Rome, and rebellion from within was hardly thought of. The very buildings of "the Romans of old," as after-ages marvelled, seemed built for eternity —often not a stone was displaced for centuries.[1]

[1] Procopius, *passim*: *e.g. B.G.* ii. 27, the attempt to destroy the cistern in the siege of Auximum.

Even in the third century, when the decline was well advanced, Tertullian could draw a splendid picture. "Certainly the world is more cultivated and better stocked than it was. All places are now accessible, all are known, all are full of trade. Pleasant estates have done away with solitudes that had once an evil fame, fields have conquered forests, cattle have put to flight wild beasts, sands are sown, rocks are planted with vines, marshes are drained, and there are more cities now than houses formerly. Islands have ceased to be waste, and rocks to frighten us: everywhere are houses, everywhere people, everywhere the state, everywhere life. . . . In very truth pestilence and famine and wars and earthquakes that swallow cities must be counted remedies, as pruning down the excess of mankind."[1]

Nor was material prosperity the highest glory of Rome. Her rule was not a rule of naked force like that of a Sennacherib or a Nebuchadnezzar, only held together by the terror of wholesale slaughter and captivity. The old republic, indeed, was not much better; but Rome was now beginning to learn that she had duties to the world she had conquered. She was the first of the great empires, and almost the only one till our own time, which turned subjects into citizens, and ruled them for their own good, and not for selfish gain. In the years men count as her decline she was doing a nobler work than that of conquest—the work summed up in Claudian's glorious words:—

> Lo Rome! imperial Rome alone is she
> Who conquered foemen to her bosom took,

[1] Tert. *de Anima* 30.

And cherished mankind with her queenly name—
No mistress she, but mother dear of all—
And children called them all, in holy bonds
Of kinship linking nations far and near.[1]

It was Rome, and Rome alone, who saved the nations from anarchy, and stayed the tide of northern war, and checked the ever-threatening advance of Asia. So she rested for centuries on the steady loyalty of a conquered world; and when she fell at last, it was not that nations revolted from her, but because she had grown too weak to keep in hand her northern mercenaries.

Yet it was a cankered world withal. Its elegance was largely the vulgar ostentation of a pampered and frivolous class, its splendour a glittering pageant which scarcely hid the abyss of social misery caused by slavery, and even its peace was paid for by a taxation which gradually ruined its industrial prosperity. Above all, the ideals of the ancient world had perished with its freedom. The old civic virtues were extinct, the old religions were dissolving, and there was nothing that could take their place. The Empire itself on one side, philosophy and superstition on the other, were only makeshifts that could do no more than stave off the catastrophe. Custom was weakened; force and selfishness remained. Family life was poisoned at its source, and even population dwindled. In a word, Society was no organic whole, but a bundle of interests held together by mere

[1] Claudian, *de consulatu Stilichonis*, iii. 150-53.

Haec est, in gremium victos quae sola recepit,
Humanumque genus communi nomine fovit
Matris, non dominae ritu, civesque vocavit,
Quos domuit, nexuque pio longinqua revinxit.

The whole passage from *v.* 130 should be studied.

human feeling, by the industry of certain classes, and by the laws and arms of Rome.

It was quite possible to break the yoke of Rome, if Jesus of Nazareth had cared to do it. Israel fought more than once on equal terms with Rome for the dominion of the East, and could scarcely have failed to win it under better leaders than Bar-Cochab and John of Gischala. But if these bad leaders represented worthily the savage fanaticism of their followers, their badness was itself the outcome of a deeper evil. A victory over Rome would only have subjected a rotten Gentile world to a rotten Jewish nation. Below political questions lie the economic, below the economic lie the moral, and below the moral lies the curse of selfishness, which was desolating the Jewish nation and the Gentile world alike. Every sentence, therefore, of our Saviour's teaching looks through the special trials of Israel to the general problem of the sin of the world, and prepares for its removal by one sacrifice for sin made once for all.

It is a complete misunderstanding of the Gospel if we find the substance of it in the moral teaching of the Sermon on the Mount. Lofty as that teaching is, the speaker's claims are still more commanding. Who is this that says, Ye have heard what Jehovah said to them of old; but I tell you something better? It is but a step from words like these to the most mysterious recorded by St. John. Christ's Person, not his teaching, is the message of the Gospel. If we know anything for certain about Jesus of Nazareth, it is that he steadily claimed to be the Son of God, the redeemer of mankind, and the ruler of the world to come, and by that claim the Gospel stands or falls. Therefore, the Lord's disciples went not forth as

preachers of morality, but as witnesses of his life, and of the historic resurrection which proved his mightiest claims. Their morality is always an inference from these, never the forefront of their teaching. They seem to think that if they can only fill men with true thankfulness for the gift of life in Christ, morality will take care of itself.

Little could they see how their message was to develop out its power in the long course of ages needed to construct even the show of a Christian world. The first disciples were devout Jews who worshipped in the temple, and lived in favour with Pharisees and people. They were not the less true Israelites but the more so for their obedience to the Son of David as the Son of God, and for seeing in His Person a revelation higher than the Law. True, there was already a social revolution implied by the spiritual equality of women, by the voluntary communism, and by the regular organization of charity by the hand of the Seven. But if the apostles themselves hardly saw the full meaning of these changes, much less did others. However, it was not long before they went far beyond the bounds of orthodox Judaism. If the Law was not the final revelation, neither could it be eternal. Stephen's declaration that Jewish privilege was not to last for ever drew down instant persecution, and Israel never forgave it.

Stephen's teaching was soon put in practice. Hitherto the Churches were composed entirely of Jews and proselytes; and so far there was no difficulty, for even the Pharisees allowed that the full proselyte was "an Israelite in all things." But when the Churches were scattered abroad by persecution,

a wider preaching followed. The first step forward was an invitation to the heretics of Samaria. The conversion of Cornelius might pass as an isolated case, and because he was already a good deal of a proselyte: but the Jews in the Church took alarm when some of the Hellenistic Christians who came to Antioch began to speak to heathen Gentiles,[1] and to bring them into the Church in such numbers as bade fair to swamp the old disciples. If this was only the fulfilment of the Lord's commission, and the natural result of all that had gone before, it was none the less a momentous and irregular step. Christian Jews could hardly bring themselves to welcome Gentile Christians, so that the wavering of Peter at Joppa and Barnabas at Antioch was natural. But when they looked back to the words of the Lord and the witness of the prophets, and saw that Christ avouched the Gentiles also by gifts of grace, they felt that they could do no less than bid them welcome to the Christian fold.

Of course an advance like this led to a great reaction. There were many who shared Peter's Jewish prejudices, but few his willingness to follow the Master's leading. Men of this sort might be as ready as any Pharisee to make a proselyte: but must he not first become a Jew and keep the Law? Would not the mere discipline be good for him? After awhile the question came to a crisis at Antioch about A.D. 50. The Jewish party might fairly look for support in the Church at Jerusalem as guided by James the brother of the Lord; for James was

[1] Acts xi. 20, Ἕλληνας. The MS. evidence leans to Ἑλληνιστάς, but preaching to Hellenists would be no novelty. The sense of the passage seems to require Ἕλληνας. Yet see Hort, *Judaistic Christianity*, p. 59.

outwardly a strict Jew, and conservative feeling was strong in the mother Church where men stood face to face with the ancient and majestic ceremonial of the temple, from which, forsooth, these ungrateful Gentiles wished to cut the churches loose. But the Judaizers found an overmatch in Saul of Tarsus, who had come up with Barnabas to the apostolic conference. Paul was already a Christian of at least fourteen years' standing, with a commission independent of the Twelve, and ideas of his own about the weakness of all law, although it were divine law. Barnabas had sought him out long ago as a pillar of the Gentile cause, and shared with him since then an important missionary journey to the heathens of Pisidia and Lycaonia. Now it was Paul's clear insight and force of character which kept firm the wavering apostles, and guided the deliberations of the conference. Even James gave his sentence according to the witness of prophecy. The principle was fully settled in favour of the Gentiles, that they were not bound to keep the Law; so that it was chiefly[1] in the interests of peace that the churches of Syria and Cilicia were directed to abstain from certain practices which gave special offence to the Jewish party. Either then or earlier, Paul and Barnabas came to an understanding with the apostles at Jerusalem. Their commission was fully recognized as independent of the Twelve, and the Gentile world was acknowledged as their sphere of labour.

St. Paul's great work now lay clear before him. Hebrew of the Hebrews though he was, he was also a cultured Greek and a citizen of Rome, and the training of his life enabled him to see through the

[1] See Hort, *Judaistic Christianity*, pp. 68-73.

Mosaic Law the powerlessness of any law whatever to overcome the carnal nature. Faith is the only means of salvation; and whoso looks to law is none of Christ's. Now faith, which is a living union with Christ, has nothing to do with race or sex or worldly calling. It was not enough to secure the consent of the apostles, that a man was not bound to become a Jew. When Peter played the hypocrite at Antioch, and carried away with him even Barnabas, the first chief of the Gentile party, he was refuted on first principles, and not by any appeal to authority. When the question came to another crisis a few years later in Galatia, St. Paul again ignored the conference. His argument is that grace and faith on one side, works and law on the other, are mutually exclusive, so that a man must choose between them. Thus he not only need not but must not become a Jew—he separates himself from Christ if he does.

The Christian churches, therefore, founded by St. Paul were essentially Gentile churches, established in the face of bitter and persistent opposition from Jews and Judaizers. In his second great missionary journey he traversed Asia and entered Europe, skirted the Aegean and visited Athens, settling down for a year and a half at Corinth, and returning by way of Ephesus to Syria. His third journey took him again through Asia; but this time he made Ephesus his headquarters for two years; after which he went over the inland of Macedonia to the borders of Illyricum, and so to Corinth, returning along the Macedonian and Asiatic coasts to Jerusalem. In three journeys, therefore, he had traversed the larger part of the Greek world, and planted churches in wide tracts of country round Antioch, Ephesus, and

Corinth. Those on the Lycus, for example, who had not seen his face, must have been founded by some of his missionary staff. But Antioch, Ephesus, and Corinth were only stages on the way from Jerusalem to Rome. A true instinct told him that the obedience of faith was incomplete till the Gospel had been preached in Rome; and a true instinct broke off the narrative of the Acts with the apostle's arrival at Rome. Though his trial would be the natural end of the two years in his own hired house, we are not told its result. If he was released, as he seems[1] to have been, the last few years of his life were only an epilogue to the labours of the past. First an obscure journey to Spain, then a visit to the East as far as Crete and Ephesus, then he is brought again to Rome to perish in the Neronian persecution.

Meanwhile, others were preaching too. The dispersion of the Twelve is implied by their commission, and by the absence of most or all of them from Jerusalem at St. Paul's visits. But it was not immediate, and may have been gradual. If St. John, for instance, is the writer of the Apocalypse, it is more likely than not that he remained at Jerusalem for nearly thirty years, so that 64, the legendary

[1] St. Paul's release from Rome is anticipated by himself (Phil. ii. 24, Philem. 22), and seems proved by (1) the Pastoral Epistles, which are decisive if genuine (which to myself does not seem seriously doubtful) and not far from decisive even if spurious; (2) the direct statement of Clement, *Ep.* 5 *ἐπὶ τὸ τέρμα τῆς δύσεως ἐλθών*, which ought to mean Spain, and cannot well mean Rome in a letter written at Rome; (3) the allusion of the Muratorian fragment to his departure for Spain, though some will set this down as a guess from Rom. xv. 21; (4) Prof. Ramsay's argument, that if he had not been acquitted, the Christians in Nero's time would have been punished summarily for the Name, and not for the *flagitia cohaerentia nomini*. To these we must add for what they are worth; (5) the connexion of his death with Peter's; (6) Roman tradition of the tombs, which carries more weight for the fact of the execution than for the site of the tombs.

The silence of later writers is of small importance.

date of the Virgin's departure, may not be far wrong. The direction also of their travels is unknown, though we have some fancy distributions of them over the ends of the earth in the legends of the second, or more likely the third, century.[1] Our best guide to it is the arrangement at the Conference, that the Three were to go to the circumcision. This would specially direct them to the great Jewish dispersions of Chaldæa, Syria, Alexandria, and Rome, but would leave them free to go almost anywhere. Beyond this we know almost nothing till after the fall of Jerusalem. We lose sight even of Peter after the scene at Antioch. It is certain that he travelled, and took his wife with him, and nearly certain that he had been at Corinth before 56;[2] but the silence of St. Paul and of the Acts is decisive proof that he had not visited Rome before 61. Thus the story of his episcopate of twenty-five years is legendary for this reason as well as others. That he was put to death is shown by the evidence of Clement and the Fourth Gospel, and that he was put to death at Rome seems proved; but his stay in the capital must have been a short one, unless he survived St. Paul. But of this presently.

[1] Summed up by Eus. iii. 1. Dr. Grierson tells me that there is Indian evidence which ought not to be ignored in favour of a visit of Thomas to India. On the value of that evidence I am not competent to speak; but thus much seems fairly proved: (1) that if the apostle came to India at all, he would come to the north-west and not to the Malabar coast, and would there meet the king actually named in the legend; (2) that Christianity may have touched India from the side of Bactria in the third century; (3) that Christianity, and in particular its doctrine of the Incarnation, may very well have been one of the factors which shaped the later growth of Brahminism. In this case Brahminism will be akin to Gnosticism, though with the important differences that incarnation, not salvation, is the idea taken up, that it is more subordinate, and that it is quite separated from the historical Christ.

[2] 1 Cor. ix. 5.

Of other apostles the only certain traces are in Asia—John at Ephesus, Philip[1] at Hierapolis. To these we may perhaps add Andrew. The special interest he has for the writer of the Fourth Gospel seems to imply that he too ended his days in Asia; and the Muratorian Fragment makes him present when that Gospel was written.

In truth, our knowledge of the apostolic age is in the highest degree scanty and imperfect. We see the grand figure of St. Paul, but the background is very dim. We have the course of the Gospel traced by a master's hand from Jerusalem to Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, and Rome; but that is all. It is hardly even the outline of a history. Two or three samples of our ignorance may be given. One is the rise of a church at Alexandria, which must have been very early. Its own tradition claimed St. Mark for its founder; but however this may be, it is a striking fact that no writer of this age or the next age has left us a word of information about the origin of this great church. We know very little more about the beginnings of the Gospel in Rome. We can only say that it was not brought there by St. Paul or by one of the Twelve, and that in 58 the two "notable apostles" Andronicus and Junias were living there. But there were already Christians in Rome half a score of years before, if we can refer the expulsion of the Jews by Claudius to their disputes with the Christians. At best, we know next to nothing till we come to the Epistle of St. Paul.

As a third sample we take the Epistle to the

[1] So Polycrates *ap.* Eus. v. 24. There is no reason to suspect any confusion with Philip the Evangelist, whose daughters are very differently described.

Hebrews. The writer is not a blunderer like Barnabas, but a thinker of the first order. He seems as conscious of weight and authority in the churches as St. Paul himself, and discusses the whole problem of Law and Gospel with an insight worthy of St. Paul, though in a more fashionable style and from another point of view. Yet his name is lost. Clement of Rome is out of the question, Luke's power seems to have been of a different sort, Apollos is at best a lucky guess, and the trifling evidence for Barnabas is balanced by the impression we get from Scripture, that he had not force of mind for such a work as this. We can only sum up for a Great Unknown.

Behind St. Paul, behind the Twelve, was a crowd of obscure missionaries. Some of them might devote themselves to the work, and wander like apostles; but every Christian was a missionary in his place and measure, and the common intercourse of trade and life spread the Gospel far and wide. Even women took their share of the work, as we see in Priscilla's case; and from slaves and freedmen it reached slaves and freedmen, and not uncommonly their masters also. Every church was in a real sense a missionary society.

II

The general result of the labours of the apostolic age was the formation of a number of Christian communities scattered over the country from Spain to the Euphrates valley. These communities all looked to Jesus of Nazareth as their Lord, and as the author of their spiritual unity, all observed his ordinances of Baptism and the Supper of the Lord, and all confessed the duty of individual obedience to

his commands, and corporate submission to one form or another of apostolic influence. Beyond these limits we find a great variety. Some even of the Pauline churches, like those in Galatia, were influenced by Jewish teachers; while Corinth is mostly Gentile, and the churches of the Lycus show traces of "oriental"[1] leanings very different from the usual lines of either Greek or Jewish thought. Thus in Galatia the old circumcision question is revived, while Corinth is occupied with practical missionary difficulties of marriage and fornication, heathen society, and the meaning of the resurrection. At Colossæ the trouble is with ascetic teaching, while in Rome the doubts are about the vegetarians. Altogether the churches shew as much variety in the apostolic age as at any later time.

How, then, did the apostles treat this variety? We know something of St. Paul's action in the matter, and we may safely assume that the others treated it in much the same way. Now, St. Paul's general rule was to let it alone. He was sent to preach; and though this implied the founding and general care of churches, it had not necessarily much to do with their ordinary government. He was bound to check on one side errors which stultified his preaching, like circumcision, the denial of the resurrection, or the ideas which underlay the confusion at the Lord's Supper; on the other, corporate disorder or immorality, as when the Corinthians preached confusedly or saw no great harm in fornication. If he is also willing to advise on further questions, he always decides them on first

[1] Hort, *Judaistic Christianity*, pp. 117-29, denies that the influences were specifically Essene.

principles, and often plainly hints that the Church ought to have settled the matter for itself without consulting him. To variety as such he shews no dislike.[1]

The organization of these churches is imperfectly known to us. Besides the general scantiness of our information on the apostolic age, we have here the special difficulty that things were in a fluid and transitional state. They were complicated on one side by the indefinite influence which the apostles held in reserve; on the other by the ministry of gifts which the ministry of office crossed without yet displacing it. Nor shall we find it altogether an advantage that the question is a battlefield of controversy. If partisan zeal has helped to collect evidence, it has also done much harm—never more than in our own time — by its appeals to other motives than the love of truth. Our best course for the present will be to sum up the statements of the New Testament itself, reserving disputed questions as much as possible till we are able freely to use later evidence.

In 1 Cor. xii. 28 St. Paul instances "first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then powers, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, kinds of tongues." In Eph. iv. 11 the risen Lord "Himself gave some as apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers" for the work of service (*διακονία*). At the head of both lists are the Apostles, for Christ sent envoys into the world as well as Caiaphas.[2] The Eleven had a position of their own,

[1] With Hort, *Ecclesia*, 84, I see no trace of any commission to the apostles to govern the churches they founded. So Sanday, *Priesthood*, 42 *sq.*

[2] On the Jewish *ἀπόστολοι*, Harnack, *Ausbreitung*, 237-40. He raises the question whether St. Paul was not a Jewish apostle before he became an apostle of Christ.

though other apostles were not inferior to them. Though twelve was always the ideal number,[1] it was perhaps never more than ideal, for it is an open question whether the Lord ever recognized Matthias in the place of Judas. Paul and Barnabas were certainly apostles, and so was James the Lord's brother, and so were others. Even "notable apostles" like Andronicus and Junias are only mentioned casually.[2] But the number cannot have been very large, for we certainly know that Timothy was not included.

If the privilege of an apostle was a lofty one, to have seen the Lord and to bear a testimony confirmed with signs and wonders, his worldly lot was a hard one. He had authority, indeed, to live of the Gospel and to take a Christian woman[3] with him as a wife; but that was all. St. Paul himself did not use even this liberty. Unlike the apostles of the Jews, whose chief function was to collect money,[4] he laboured with his own hands that he might make the Gospel free of charge. Because the apostle's message was universal, he was attached to no local Church, but wandered from city to city, and had no certain dwelling-place. If St. Paul sometimes worked for awhile from a centre like Ephesus or Corinth, he never made himself a home. First in labours, first in hardships, first in dangers, the apostle stood out like a doomed *bestiarius* of the amphitheatre—*morituri te salutant, Caesar*—in the sight of the world and

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 5, Apoc. xxi. 14.

[2] Rom. xvi. 7.

[3] 1 Cor. ix. 5. Was there a case or two of an apostle's wife remaining an unbeliever?

[4] I think we may read this between the lines of passages like 1 Cor. iv. 12, ix. 15, Acts xx. 34. The abuse of this liberty by false prophets would seem to have brought the apostolate into discredit at the end of the century.

angels and men.[1] Next to the apostle in both passages comes the shadowy figure of the prophet, whom we shall reserve for the present. Suffice it that he seems to have been more or less like the apostle, but with the important difference that he was not required to be a personal witness of the Resurrection. After him we find a group of preachers—the evangelist is even more obscure than the prophet—followed in 1 Cor. xii. 28 by special "gifts of healings, helps, governments, kinds of tongues."

It will be seen that these lists are concerned with a ministry of special gifts, and that there is no place in them for local officials of the Churches, unless they come in under helps and governments, or pastors and teachers. Yet such officials there must have been at an early time, and such we know there were, though their traces are not very clear in the earlier writings of St. Paul. Setting aside the Pastoral Epistles for a moment, we have (1) the appointment of the Seven at Jerusalem; (2) elders at Jerusalem in 44, mentioned by James and by Peter, appointed by Paul and Barnabas in every Church in South Galatia about 48, at Ephesus in 58; (3) bishops and deacons at Philippi in 63. To these we may add (4) "rulers" (Heb. xiii. 7, 17), in an unknown Church of Hebrew Christians not long before 70, and (5) the "angels" of the seven Churches in Asia a little later, if we take the Neronian date of the Apocalypse. But in the Pastoral Epistles Timothy

[1] 1 Cor. v. 9. Tradition will have it that all the apostles but St. John were put to death. This is true of James the son of Zebedee, of James the Lord's brother, and of Peter and Paul. But if Andrew and Philip retired to Asia, they most likely died in peace, like St. John, of whom there is no serious reason for doubt. Of the rest we have nothing but idle tales.

and Titus are vicars-apostolic in command of five classes (better not call them orders) of officials. They have bishops, (or elders[1]), deacons, widows, and deaconesses.[2] This great advance, which some think fatal to their genuineness, may fairly be accounted for by the vigorous growth of Church life, and by the efforts at organization which cannot but have marked the close of the Apostolic age.

The questions before us may conveniently be grouped round the later offices of bishops, elders, and deacons, which, however, we shall take in the reverse order. In the first place then; was the appointment of the Seven (Acts vi.) the formal institution of an order of deacons? This is the traditional view; and it is doubtful at best, quite apart from the fact that the conception of an order is of later growth. The opinions of Cyprian and later writers, and even that of Irenæus, ought not to count for much on a question of this kind. We must go back to the New Testament; and there the vague word *διακονία* (used directly after of the apostles themselves) is balanced by the avoidance of the word *deacon* throughout the Acts. When we meet Philip again, he is "one of the Seven."[3] Some will note that the Seven rank next to the apostles, and find in them the elders who receive the offerings from Barnabas and Saul at Jerusalem a few years later.[4] This, however, is unlikely, for the functions of the Seven are clearly subordinate. In any case we are thrown back upon the Philippian Church in 63 for the first express

[1] Timothy appoints bishops and deacons, Titus elders and deacons. But (1 Tim. v. 17) Timothy is not without elders under him.

[2] 1 Tim. iii. 11 *γυναῖκας* (not *τὰς γυν.*) *ὡσαύτως* cannot be the wives of deacons.

[3] Acts xxi. 8.

[4] Acts xi. 30.

mention of deacons, though the office must have originated some time before, for Phœbe is a deaconess at Cenchreæ in 58.

But was it a definite office at all? Perhaps the best solution of this difficulty as well as others is Hort's theory that it was not a definite office, but a function of ministration corresponding to ἐπισκοπή, a function of oversight, so that bishops and deacons are not two definite orders of officials, but simply such as oversee and such as serve, whatever offices they may hold.[1]

Concerning elders. Of course the word often means nothing more than the older members of the Churches, and in the next age the survivors of apostolic times, like those from whom Papias got his information. There is no more than a contrast of age when Ananias is carried out by the younger men who chance to be present, or where Peter tells them to be subject to older men, and perhaps when Timothy is directed not to rebuke an elder.[2] But

[1] Hort, *The Christian Ecclesia*, esp. 190. He takes ἐπίσκοπος in all places as descriptive of function, not of office: thus Tit. i. 5 πρεσβυτέρους, εἴ τίς ἐστιν ἀνέγκλητος.. δεῖ γὰρ τὸν ἐπίσκοπον (him that hath oversight) ἀνέγκλητον εἶναι, or Phili. i. τοῖς ἁγίοις τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Φιλίπποις σὺν ἐπισκόποις καὶ διακόνοις (such as oversee and such as minister) where the two descriptions together include whatever officials there may have been in the Church. So Robinson in *Encycl. Bibl.* Art. "Bishop."

This theory, that ἐπίσκοπος did not yet denote a definite office at all, fairly explains the identification (*e.g.* Tit. i. 5, 7) of bishop and elder alternating with their separation (Tit. i. 7, ii. 2) and their co-existence at Ephesus and Crete, while yet they are never joined together.

Hatch (*Bampton Lect.* 1880) assigned the care of public worship and the poor to the bishops and deacons, while elders (like the Jewish) formed a court attached to the Church, so that they were concerned rather with government and discipline. But (*a*) the evidence for the existence of such a court is not strong; (*b*) it is not likely that offices were so sharply separated; (*c*) in any case the Pastoral Epistles do not separate them in this way.

[2] Acts v. 6 (the change to νεανίσκοι v. 10 in Sapphira's case negatives the official sense); 1 Peter v. 5; 1 Tim. iv. 1.

the contrast of age shades into that of office, and the distinction between them is not always clear; and even when the reference is undoubtedly to office, the nature of the office may be far from certain. Elders, and deacons perhaps in a less degree, would commonly be older men, so that there might even be a tendency to class together all the officials as πρεσβύτεροι — reverend gentlemen — in contrast to the Church generally.[1]

That the "bishops" in the New Testament were not what we call bishops is proved at once by the single fact that there were sundry of them at Philippi. They evidently stand in some close relation to the elders. Thus the elders of Ephesus are reminded[2] that they are bishops, and the qualifications of the bishops and elders as described to Timothy and Titus are nearly the same, and point to oversight certainly, and to the same sort of oversight, but to oversight which is pastoral, not what we should call episcopal. Again, St. Paul's argument from the bishop to the elder would be no argument at all, if the bishops were already no more than a small class among the elders.[3] The rough general equivalence of bishops and elders in the New Testament has very seldom been disputed since the controversies of the seventeenth century.[4] Upon the whole their position and duties (apart from the question of a possible superior) are not unlike those of the priest as described in the English Ordinal.

[1] This is actually Wrede's theory for Corinth in Clement's time, that πρεσβ. = ἐπίσκ. + διάκ. = "reverend gentlemen."

[2] Acts xx. 28.

[3] Tit. i. 5, 7 ἵνα καταστήσῃς πρεσβυτέρους . . δεῖ γὰρ τὸν ἐπίσκοπον. This seems to dispose of Dean Robinson's ingenious endeavour (*Encycl. Bibl.* Art. "Bishop") to find a bishop in the later sense in τὸν ἐπισκ. of 1 Tim. iii. 1.

[4] Lightfoot, *Philippians*. Note on the Synn. bishop and presbyter.

Leaving in abeyance the question of their exact equivalence, we have now to ask whether in the New Testament there are any traces of bishops in the later sense. Do we find a class of permanent local officials, each standing singly at the head of the elders of a single city?[1] Whatever name they bear, these will be the bishops we are looking for. The instances commonly given are James the Lord's brother at Jerusalem, Timothy and Titus in Ephesus and Crete, and the "angels" of the Apocalypse in Asia. Now James was no doubt the chief man at Jerusalem, especially after the removal of the other "pillars." His strictness of life and relation to the Lord (a more important matter to Easterns than to us) must have given him enormous influence; and he was, moreover, an apostle, though not one of the Twelve. But for the catastrophe of the Roman war, there might, in another generation, have been an attempt to govern the Churches by some sort of an Abbasside Khalifate of the Lord's relations at Jerusalem. But influence is one thing, office is another, and there is no serious evidence that he held the office of Bishop of Jerusalem.

[1] This is the definition of the Bishop, when we first find him. Country bishops governing villages cannot be more than a secondary growth of the office, for the Gospel spread from city to city, and more slowly to the country. So far as I am aware, there is no early instance of a bishop not holding his office for life. Even translations cannot be traced before the third century, and were forbidden at Nicæa. Neither do we find two bishops governing one Church, for Narcissus of Jerusalem at the age of 116 is hardly a real exception either to this or to the life tenure; or with two bishops governing distinct Churches in one city, unless Hippolytus at Portus be an exception; and least of all do we find one bishop governing several cities. It is not till Teutonic times that we have bishops of tribes, like the Goths or the Kentishmen; and the modern territorial bishop is a still later development.

Of course the city bishop, the village bishop, the tribal bishop, and the territorial bishop are equally legitimate forms of the office. The point is that the city bishop was its original form. The early Church was necessarily governed by city bishops, because the ancient world was as definitely made up of cities as the modern world is made up of territorial states.

The story was an old one in the time of Eusebius, for we find it in the Clementine romances; but there is no sign that Eusebius knew anything definite about the matter, for we cannot take seriously the episcopal chair which was shewn in his time as that of James.[1] It is possible, however, that other Churches may have taken a hint from the success of James, though his own did not, if we may judge by the unnaturally rapid succession of bishops in the next century at Ælia Capitolina.

The case of Timothy and Titus is a stronger one, for their work of appointing and governing elders is plainly that which is now done by the bishop. But this is work which must be done under any form of government; and even if it is done by a single man, we still need the permanent tenure and the local position to make him a bishop. We must not turn the moderator of the Scotch Assembly into a bishop in spite of himself. In the case of Timothy and Titus, the permanent office is wanting, and Titus is, moreover, not connected with any particular city. They seem rather to have been vicars-apostolic, sent on temporary missions in the apostle's place. Ephesus and the Cretan Churches were in a bad state, and needed attention. The letters from which we get our information are actually letters of recall,[2] and there is no evidence worth mention that they ever saw Ephesus and Crete again. Titus is last heard of as gone to Dalmatia,[3] while Timothy appears in the Epistle to the Hebrews,[4] a work which there is no reason to connect in any way with Ephesus.

There remain the "angels" of the seven Churches

[1] Eus. vii. 19, 29.
[2] 1 Tim. iv. 9.; Tit. iii. 12.
[3] 2 Tim. iv. 10.
[4] Hebr. xiii. 23.

of Asia. It would be rash to take these for literal bishops, especially if we accept the Neronian date. Besides the strong general presumption from the symbolic structure of the Apocalypse, there is the particular argument that it is almost impossible to take literally "the woman Jezebel" connected with the angel of Thyatira.[1] Moreover, these angels are identified with their Churches in praise and blame, and made responsible for them to an extent no literal bishop justly can be. They seem rather personifications or spiritual doubles[2] of their Churches. Of the "rulers" in the Epistle to the Hebrews[3] it is enough to say that the plural rulers of a Church cannot be a single bishop.

Upon the whole we meet with elders quite early in the apostolic age, and deacons rather later, but we find no trace of bishops in the New Testament.

[1] Apoc. ii. 20. The reading *τὴν γυναῖκά σου* would even make her the angel's wife.

[2] As in Acts. xii. 15.; Mt. xviii. 10.

[3] Hebr. xiii. 7, 17.

Books

N.T. literature generally. On Church Government: Lightfoot, *Exc. on the Christian Ministry* in *Ep. Phil.*; Gore, *The Church and the Ministry* (practically a reply to Lightfoot); Hort, *The Christian Ecclesia*; Allen, *Christian Institutions*; Hatch, *Bampton Lectures*; Sohm, *Kirchenrecht.*

CHAPTER V

THE NERONIAN PERSECUTION

In the whole range of history there is no more striking contrast than that of the Apostolic Churches with the heathenism round them. They had shortcomings enough, it is true, and divisions and scandals not a few, for even apostolic times were no golden age of purity and primitive simplicity. Yet we can see that their fulness of life, and hope, and promise for the future was a new sort of power in the world. Within their own limits they had solved almost by the way the social problem which baffled Rome, and baffles Europe still. They had lifted woman to her rightful place, restored the dignity of labour, abolished beggary, and drawn the sting of slavery. The secret of the revolution is that the selfishness of race and class was forgotten in the Supper of the Lord, and a new basis for society found in love of the visible image of God in men[1] for whom Christ died. Their mere extension outward from Jerusalem was amazing, for, within a single generation, the name of Christ was named from the far West of Spain and Gaul[2] to the far East of Babylon and Parthia. Yet they cherished no illusions of peaceful progress, but looked forward to increasing tribulation. The time of mercy was

[1] 1 Jno. iv. 12; v. 1.
[2] 2 Tim. iv. 10, Crescens to Gaul.

passing away, the last days were drawing to an end, the coming of the Lord was hastening on. Year by year the clouds of wrath seemed gathering, the signs of judgment growing plainer; and when the tempest burst, its fury shook the world, and made the everlasting Empire reel. The fires of the Neronian persecution shone out in lurid horror like the dawning of the day of doom. Then came Israel's mighty challenge for the empire of the East. The zealots were a grimmer foe than Rome had met since Hannibal turned his back on Italy. It was long before the legions were able to encompass Jerusalem like the army of the Chaldees of old, and the Holy City and the temple were burnt again with fire, and two years longer still before the last desperate resistance was overcome, and there was silence on the stubbornly defended cliff of Masada. The Jewish state was at an end, and with it the Law of Moses as a living code. In the midst of this great struggle the Empire itself was convulsed with shocks which seemed to break its solid base in pieces. There was hard fighting on the Rhine as well as in Judæa, and civil wars of phantom emperors revealed the fatal power of the legions to make and unmake the masters of the world. Small marvel if many a Christian heart was fluttered with eager hope, to see in the clouds of heaven him come that was to come, to avenge his slaughtered saints and rescue his elect.

Though the apostles had to suffer much from the hatred of Jews and Greeks, they were shielded from a good deal more by the protection of the Empire. So long as the Christians were regarded as a sect of Jews, they might be hated as Jews, but they had a right to toleration as Jews. Because they were

subject to the discipline of the synagogue, they escaped the sword of the Roman governor. Upon the whole the Empire was a protecting power. The lawless cowardice[1] of the prætors at Philippi was exceptional. Gallio refuses to hear questions of Jewish law, and Festus does his best to avoid them. The Asiarchs are willing to hinder violence at Ephesus, and the Recorder invokes the fear of Rome to put an end to the tumult.[2] Even with a charge of treason before them, the Greek magistrates of Thessalonica think it enough to take bail of Jason and the rest. So far, then, we have a clear policy of toleration. Much of the deep impression made by the Neronian persecution was caused by the sudden reversal of this toleration, which brought the Christians face to face with the appalling prospect of seeing the whole power of the Empire put forth to crush them. Roman toleration had been challenged by the settlement of the circumcision question; for without circumcision they could not claim to be Jews, and if they were not Jews they fell at once under the penalties of the law against unauthorized societies. But the Neronian persecution was not a measure of reasoned policy; it had other and baser causes.[3]

Christianity was fast becoming notorious in Rome.

[1] Acts xvi. 37. [2] Acts xix. 31, 40.

[3] The numerous questions connected with the Neronian persecution cannot be fully examined here. It may be enough to state my belief (1) that the Church in Rome was mainly Gentile. I cannot follow Hausrath, *New Testament Times*, iv. 156 *sq.* E.Tr, in setting it down as little better than a synagogue of zealots. (2) That Tacitus is fully aware of the distinction between Jews and Christians, and alludes to the foul charges against the Christians. (3) That the mob of Nero's time knew the distinction, and spread the foul charges. (4) That the persecution was aimed at Christians, not at Jews.

So far the arguments of Franklin Arnold (amongst others) seem decisive; but there is no reason to suppose that the persecution was limited to Rome, and the Apocalypse does seem to be its Christian counterblast.

Its presence may have led to the repeated riots which caused the expulsion of the Jews by Claudius,[1] and made them cautious in their dealings with St. Paul.[2] It seems from the first to have had its centre in the palace, and soon counted converts of every rank in Cæsar's household. As early as 57 it reached the highest circles in the person of Pomponia Græcina, the wife of Aulus Plautius, the conqueror of Britain. As the "foreign superstition" of which she was accused cannot well have been Judaism, it can hardly have been anything else than Christianity.[3] She was sent for trial to her husband and relations, by whom she was acquitted.

But if the sword of persecution was not yet ready, there were other means of hindering the Gospel. Foul charges of immorality seem the perennial interpretation of hated worships by the vulgar. The Jews had already had some experience of them, and are not quite rid of them yet in Hungary. Scarcely a heretic escapes them from the Gnostics to quite modern times, and they are rife against ourselves in China to this day. Their currency even before the Neronian persecution seems proved by Tacitus.[4] In truth, the worst charges were only reasonable inferences, when lewd fellows of the baser sort were judging the Christians by themselves. If the Lord's supper was

[1] Sueton. *Claudius* 25.

[2] Acts xxviii. 21, 22. The answer must be diplomatic, for it is impossible to suppose them really ignorant that there were Christians in Rome. Yet they are polite enough to give him a hearing.

[3] This seems settled now by de Rossi's discovery of the Crypt of Lucina. On Pomponia, Lightfoot, *Clement* i. 30 *sq.*

[4] The allusion seems beyond mistake in Tac. xv. 44, *flagitiis* invisos . . . *atrocia* aut *pudenda*; and very likely in Sueton. *Nero* 16 superstitio *malefica*, and in 1 Peter ii. 11-15. There is nothing so clear as this in the Apocalypse, which was not written at Rome.

held in secret, what could be more natural than to put out the lights and wallow in sin? So, too, their claims to miraculous gifts and cures looked like magic, and went well with their denunciations of the end of the world by fire. Miscreants like these must be capable any day of a little fire-raising on their own account.

Thickly as the clouds of scandal rest on parts of Nero's life, it seems clear that he had the tastes of a disreputable tavern musician, and the temper of a vicious boy. Mere cruelty and general filthiness of life were very mildly judged at Rome; but an emperor without the smallest sense of dignity was a new phenomenon. Yet the vulgarity which society hated was precisely what made him a man after the mob's own heart. Only the aristocracy hated him, for the provinces were not oppressed even in his worst years, so that better men than the lazzaroni of the circus regretted Nero's death, and wished him back again when they felt the pressure of Vespasian's taxes. Yet even the mob could have no respect for him; and though common murders were hardly noticed, that of his mother in 59 made a deep impression. So there were strange rumours in the streets when a great fire broke out in Rome (July 64), and made thousands homeless. It was said that Nero was himself the author of the calamity, and that he had been heartless enough to accompany it with his fiddle to the tune of the burning of Troy. The first charge at any rate may be false, for the danger of popular discontent is much more evident than any object which Nero could have had in lighting the fire.[1] However, as he

[1] Though the story is given by Pliny and Suetonius as well as Tacitus, it can hardly be true. Schiller, *K.G.* i. 359. The arson was more in Caligula's vein than Nero's. The fresh outbreak of the fire in the house of Tigellinus does not prove much.

depended on the mob for bare life, he had to take vigorous measures to recover their favour. If largesses and expiations were not enough, why not charge it on the Christians? The idea came from false brethren, if this is the meaning of Clement's repeated hints,[1] though the Jews may have done a good deal to stir up the popular hatred which made the charge so dangerous. The rest may be told in the words of Tacitus, to whom Nero and the Christians were equally hateful.

"To get rid of the rumour, Nero put in his own place as culprits and subjected to the most refined punishments the men whom the common people hated for their secret crimes, and called Christians. Christ, from whom they had that name, had been put to death in the reign of Tiberius by the procurator, Pontius Pilate, and the pestiferous superstition was checked for awhile. Afterwards it began to break out afresh, not only in Judæa, where the mischief had its rise, but in Rome also, where all sorts of murder and filthy shame from all quarters meet together and become the fashion. In the first place then some were seized and made to confess (the arson): then on their information a vast multitude was convicted on charges not so much of arson as of hatred for the human race. And they were not only put to death but put to death with insult, in that they were dressed up in the skins of beasts to perish either by the worrying of dogs or on crosses or by fire, or when the daylight failed, they were burnt to serve as lights by night. Nero had thrown open his gardens for that spectacle, and was giving a circus performance, joining the rabble in a jockey's dress,

[1] Clement, *Ep.* 5, 6 διὰ ζῆλον five times.

or driving a chariot. Hence commiseration arose, though it was for men that were criminals and deserved the severest penalties, on the ground that they were not destroyed for the good of the state, but to satisfy the cruelty of an individual."[1]

The investigation changed its character as it went on, as roving commissions in quest of evidence are apt to do. Tacitus clearly distinguishes two stages of the proceedings. First, individuals are charged with arson, and a few confessions obtained by the usual tortures.[2] Next, the charge of fire-raising is resolved into one of "hatred of the human race"; and this became the staple charge in a second stage of wider persecution. Tacitus means by it disaffection to the Empire and to society in general; and the evidence of it would be found in the practice of magic and secret crimes. But there would always be a strong temptation to cut short the trials by taking the avowal of Christianity as a confession of the abominations connected with it. The churches were at best unlawful assemblies; and if a man was disloyal enough to belong to them, he must take the risk. Nor can it have been long before a ready test of Christianity was found in the worship of the emperor. In any case, an administrative order seems to have been made against Christians as such.[3] So far well. It was very right in the eyes of Tacitus and of society in general, to put to death miscreants

[1] Tac. *Ann.* xv. 44.

[2] So Franklin Arnold, distinguishing *fatebantur* from *confitebantur* (willing confession) and *profitebantur* (avowal). Hardy's reply (*Chr. and the Roman Gov.* 66) does not seem convincing, even if *correpti* means put on their trial. In any case *qui fatebantur* need not be "the cream of the Christian community."

[3] Prof. Ramsay notes that Nero punished avowed Christians only after proof (such as it was) of ordinary crimes, whereas Pliny ordered them without

like these, and that by the sword, the cross, and the fire, which were the penalties of law for magic and arson. But this turning of a public execution into one of Nero's vulgar pantomimes was demoralizing, for it had the deplorable result of exciting pity for criminals who thoroughly deserved their punishment. Tacitus, however, is too busy blackening Nero to go far out of his way for the Christians. He leaves Clement to tell us, what, indeed, was not the finishing touch to a heathen, that even women were not spared the worst horrors of Nero's gardens.[1]

Did the persecution extend to the provinces? The investigation of the fire may have been limited to Rome; but the matter would naturally spread farther when the wider charges were introduced. The scenes in Nero's gardens must have stirred up the baser enemies of the Christians all over the

further questions to execution. The change was not of law but of administrative procedure; but I cannot follow him in ascribing it to Vespasian rather than to the later stages of the Neronian persecution.

First, "the development was easy" and saved so much trouble that Nero (or somebody else in his absence) had time enough to make it in the four years which followed the fire of Rome. I cannot see that the persecution (for the *odium humani generis*) "was obviously at an end when Nero left Rome towards the end of 66": but even if this were the case, the "sporadic executions" always going on would give occasion enough for so easy a change. As regards positive evidence, it is likely enough that Sulpicius Severus is loosely following Tacitus: but in any case his *postea* is utterly vague as a date. Suetonius, however, plainly tells us that Nero punished the Christians by a new and "permanent police regulation," which cannot well have been required except to make a new crime of Christianity itself. The evidence which connects the change with Vespasian is on Prof. Ramsay's own showing very trifling, and can hardly be reconciled with "the strong and early tradition which constitutes Domitian the second great persecutor."

[1] Clement, *Ep.* 6 γυναῖκες †Δαναΐδες καὶ Δίρκαι†. Upon the whole, we must give up Wordsworth's ingenious conjecture γυναῖκες νεάνιδες παιδίσκαι "still favoured" by Lightfoot in 1889. The evidence (A.C.S. Lat.) against it seems now too strong. Either reading, however, shews that women were not spared. If the actual legends of the Danaids and Dirce did not quite suit, they could be "handled freely," as when Orpheus was devoured by a bear. The difference of Clement's tone from that of Tacitus is characteristic.

Empire, and the governors could not shield them from imperial instructions to punish them as Christians. They could not now dismiss the charge like Gallio; and, when once it was before them, the accused had no escape but by first denying his faith and then proving his innocence of any further charges. But (so scanty is our information) we know nothing of what was going on outside Rome except from the Apocalypse. There we find persecution rampant in Asia. There is "patience" at Ephesus, "tribulation" at Smyrna, and Antipas was a martyr at Pergamus. The saints are slain with the axe for refusing to worship the emperor, and Rome is drunk with their blood. The strife between the Empire and the Church is internecine. The answer to persecution speaks no longer of appealing to the justice of the state or living down the slanders, only of judgment and avenging. "How long, O Lord?"

With two exceptions,[1] the victims of the persecution are nameless; but the two exceptions are the two great apostles. The fact seems clear, even if we disregard the evidence of the New Testament. Clement joins their fates in his account of the persecution, and Dionysius of Corinth adds that they were both put to death at Rome about the same time.[2] Early in the third century Caius of Rome gives the local tradition thus: "But I can shew the trophies of the apostles. For if thou wilt go to the Vatican, or to the Ostian road, thou wilt find the trophies of those who founded this church."[2] As regards Peter, however, the date is not quite clear, so that he may not have perished till the worst of

[1] Antipas at Pergamus (Apoc. ii. 13) may be a third, and St. John himself a fourth as an exile.

[2] Eus. ii. 25.

the persecution was over, or may even have survived Nero for a few years.[1]

[1] The current story as regards Peter consists of the three items: (A) that he went to Rome; (B) that he was put to death; (C) that he suffered under Nero. The evidence may be summed up thus:—

For (A): (*a*) 1 Peter v. 13, if Babylon be Rome; (*b*) Papias, *ap.* Eus. iii. 39 (Mark the *ἑρμηνευτής* of Peter, which must be for Latin followers); (*c*) Irenæus, *Haer.* iii. 1. 1 (perhaps only following Papias); (*d*) Clement of Alexandria, *ap.* Eus. vi. 14 (a distinct tradition of Peter at Rome).

For (B): (*a*) John xxi. 18, 19 confirmed by the allusion of 2 Peter. i. 14 can scarcely mean anything but crucifixion. In this connection it matters little whether the writings are genuine; (*b*) Clement, *supra*, expressly records it; (*c*) *Fragm. Muratori* explains why it is not mentioned in the Acts.

For (A) and (B) together, and by more or less clear inference for (C): (*a*) Clement, *supra*, writing from Rome, and (*b*) Ignatius, *Rom.* 4, writing to Rome, significantly join the two apostles, and may imply that they were put to death together; (*c*) Dionysius of Corinth, *supra*, and (*d*) Caius of Rome, *supra*, say that they were both put to death at Rome; and the former adds *κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν καιρόν*.

The evidence, then (later writers need not detain us) seems clear for (A), and also for (B); while for (C) we have a general impression, and the loose words of Dionysius, but no definite statement before the third century. If Peter survived a few years longer, and perished when the worst of the storm was over, his name would naturally be added to the list of Nero's victims, as that of Peter of Alexandria is added to Diocletian's. Several difficulties are lightened if this was actually the case. Thus the accounts of his preaching in Rome imply a longer stay than the N.T. narrative or Porphyry (*μηδ' ὀλίγους μῆνας*) seems to leave room for. Again, the influence of St. Paul's later writings on his First Epistle is better explained by putting it a little later than by rejecting the strong attestation of its genuineness. On the other hand the developed persecution rightly recognized by Prof. Ramsay (*Church in the Roman Empire*, esp. p. 292) does not compel us to bring down the Epistle beyond the later stages of the Neronian persecution. The final decision is a balance of difficulties. It is unlikely (Ramsay, p. 285) that there were churches in Pontus much before 80; unlikely also that Peter's life was prolonged much beyond 70. The second difficulty seems the weightier; so the date must be put at 70, or not much later.

It may be added that if the episcopates of Linus and Anencletus followed entire, and lasted twenty-four years according to the Eusebian list, then 71 is the latest date possible, so as to leave room for Clement in 95.

The Apocalypse describes a still more developed persecution than the First Epistle of Peter. The Christians are punished as such, and the worship of the emperor is already made a test. But these developments, as we have seen, are not necessarily post-Neronian. The persecution may have been systematic and long continued in Asia without compelling us to date the Apocalypse later than Peter's Epistle. We must allow for the difference of locality, and also for the action of persecution on so stern a temper as St. John's.

The Neronian persecution was not begun with any deliberate policy, however it may have led to one. It was so to speak an accident that the Christians were the most convenient victims after the fire; and if that had been all, the executions would soon have been like the fire itself, a ghastly memory and nothing more. But the popular hatred which made them the most convenient victims was not an accident. It was the natural answer of the world to the claims of Christ, and was to his followers a permanent danger which nothing could remove but the conquest of the world. Henceforth, the Christian must put his life in his hand. However long he might be left in quiet, he might be arrested any day; and then there was no escape but through apostasy. He could never know for certain that the sword or the cross would not be his doom before the day was ended. The world had at last thrown down its challenge, and there was no more hope of peace. St. John returned the world's defiance with his vision of judgment and vengeance, and with the still more lofty scorn of his Epistle, as though the Empire in the fulness of Satanic power was but a passing show,[1] like one of Nero's hideous games. But we cannot reach the full meaning of the Neronian crisis till we have seen what was going on in Judæa.

Jesus or Barabbas? The choice remained open for nearly forty years. Would Israel receive the liberty of Christ, or fight with Rome for such liberty as a Barabbas might give? The Christians had one clear policy, the Zealots had another, and in the long-

[1] 1 Jno. ii. 17 ὁ κόσμος παράγεται. Nearly the same thought in St. Paul, 1 Cor. ii. 6 τῶν καταργουμένων.

run no third was possible. The Sadducee was full of covetousness and oppression, and aimed only at keeping things quiet. Little could be hoped for from the vain and timid Pharisee, who was hardly better than a Zealot without the courage of his convictions, and even less from the selfish and cowardly pietism of the Essene, who watched from the desert the progress of his country's ruin. The times of Zedekiah had returned, with their lawless violence and hatred of the Gentile conqueror, and blind reliance on a temple they were profaning with treachery and murder. It was not even a house of merchandise, but a den of brigands. Meanwhile, after Herod Agrippa's death in 44, the country was governed again by Roman procurators in the old brutal way. Cuspius Fadus indeed, and even the renegade Jew Tiberius Alexander, kept the country tolerably quiet, though it was seething with discontent and brigandage and false Messiahs. In the time of Cumanus the disorders increased, and under the government of Felix the condition of the province became alarming. Common brigandage developed into political assassination, and the Roman governors began to make an alliance with the assassins. Felix employed them to kill the high priest Jonathan, to whom he owed his office. Albinus allowed rival high priests to fight out their quarrel in the streets, and let out of prison every murderer who had the means to bribe him. Gessius Florus went shares with the robbers for the plunder of whole cities. It was as if Rome was tired of the confusion, and wished to end it by provoking a revolt. Society was held together by the fear of Rome; and when the governors went over to the forces of anarchy, the catastrophe could not be long

delayed. Jewish lawlessness and Roman insolence together had made it unavoidable.

The Christians in Judæa were between the hammer and the anvil. They were Jews, not Gentiles, yet Israel would have none of them. Sadducees and Zealots were for once agreed in hating the Christians, and even the Pharisees were not their friends. They might be called in question for the hope and resurrection of the dead; but no orthodoxy could atone for their connection with men who walked disorderly and did not keep the Law. So, though their lives were fairly safe, they had much trial of spoilings and synagogue punishments,[1] and no doubt their full share of suffering from the disorders of the time.

After the dispersion of the apostles the post of danger at Jerusalem was held by James, the brother of the Lord. We find him there at the apostolic conference, and again at St. Paul's return in 57. James was not a Judaizer. We see him at the conference freeing the Gentiles from circumcision, and in his Epistle alluding to the Lord in tones of deeper and more distant reverence than is due from man to man.[2] Yet he was a strict Jew, whose blameless life commanded general admiration. If any man could win the people to the Gospel, it was James. So the crisis was decisive, when the high priest Ananus took advantage of the death of Festus in 62 to get him stoned by the sentence of an irregular court. Josephus blames it as an act of

[1] Heb. xii. 4, x. 34: Luke xxi. 12.

[2] James i. 1 *κυρίου*, 'I.X. *δοῦλος*, ii. 1 *κυρίου* 'I.X. *τῆς δόξης* (whether in apposition or not), iv. 12 *εἷς ἐστιν νομοθέτης καὶ κριτής*, v. 6 *ἐφονεύσατε τὸν δίκαιον* (even if generic). The Epistle seems to be genuine and of early date, and is evidently full of the Lord's words.

Sadducean cruelty, and we may well believe that some even of the Pharisees looked on the calamities which followed as a judgment for the killing of the Just.[1]

The murder of James was a horror even for those times of lawless outrage; and it was a proclamation of war to the death against the Christians. The breach made by Stephen was not final while a brother of the Lord was counted by the people for a saint; but now there was a great gulf fixed between "the nation"[2] and the churches. In the later Apostolic age, the enemy of the Gospel is no longer the scribes and Pharisees, or the chief priests, but "the Jews."[3] The time was come when even born Jews must choose between the Gospel and the Law. Yet there were still some forlorn souls who strove to obey both at once; and theirs was the bitterest of all the disappointments. They had left all to follow Christ; but where was the hundredfold reward? The Jews hated them for confessing Christ, while the churches more and more rejected them for not truly confessing him as Lord of all. This was the fact: they had *not*

[1] Jos. *Ant.* xx. 1. I see no ground for Schürer's suspicions (*Hist.* § 19, p. 187, E.Tr.) of Christian interpolation. The phrase τοῦ λεγομένου Χριστοῦ differs entirely from ὁ Χριστὸς οὗτος ἦν in *Ant.* xviii. 3. 3, and is no more than Ananus himself might have written. The statements of Origen may be his own inferences, or even a confusion with Hegesippus.

In strong contrast to the sober story of Josephus is the account of Hegesippus. Eusebius quotes both in *H.E.* ii. 23. The touch of legend is beyond mistake, though it may contain much that is true.

As regards the date, the definite account of Josephus connecting it with the death of Festus is to be preferred to the vague expression of Hegesippus that "straightway Vespasian besieged them." Ananus was killed in the winter of 67-68, more than two years before Titus began the siege at the passover of 70.

[2] This is the point of St. John's comment xi. 52 on the "prophecy" of Caiaphas. Israel is now no more than one of the nations.

[3] Matt. xxviii. 15, John, *passim*. Very naturally St. Paul already comes near it in 1 Thess. ii. 15, Col. iii. 2.

left all for Christ. They still clung to the memories of Sinai and the glories of the temple service, and therefore they could not win Christ. It was a hard saying, that they must give up all these things; yet it was the only safe course for them. On the edge of the storm that was visibly gathering over the nation a nameless Christian teacher writes to a nameless church of Hebrew Christians, that the stately ceremonial of the temple was merely a type of something better, the Law itself no more than a shadow of the good things which had come to pass.[1] Christ was higher than Moses, higher than Aaron, for he has the timeless priesthood of the order of Melchizedek. The vail of the temple shews that if the Law partly revealed God, it also partly concealed him; but now the vail is done away, and we all have free access to God through Christ our one high priest, who by the one sacrifice of Himself has done away our sins and won for us an everlasting redemption. So there is no more offering for sin: the only sacrifice left is that of thanksgiving. It is the Jews who have the shadow; we have the reality. They have the perishing temple; we have the everlasting priest. So far from Israel's rejection of us being strange, it is the very sign of victory. As the Jews cast out Christ to suffer outside the city, so must we go out to Him, and renounce the Law at its Master's bidding.

At last the outrages of Florus provoked a dreadful rising in Jerusalem (May 66). King Agrippa stilled the tumult for a moment, but only for a moment. The Zealots were bent on war, and Sadducees and Pharisees together could not stop them now. War was proclaimed by the refusal of the emperor's

[1] Hebr. ix. 11 *τῶν γενομένων ἀγαθῶν.*

offerings, and made internecine by the butchery of the Roman garrison. In October the army of Cestius Gallus was repulsed from the city, and routed near Beth-horon in its retreat. Here was the signal which the Lord had given, of Jerusalem compassed with armies, and the Christians "fled to the mountains," to Pella beyond Jordan. They had clung to their own people hitherto; but now that a final choice had to be made, they could only leave the city of rebels to the evil which the Lord was bringing upon it.

The defeat of Cestius committed the nation to a struggle of life and death with Rome. Even the moderates, who had neither wish for war nor hope of success, were forced to join a government of national defence, and organize the country for resistance. But half-hearted Sadducees and Pharisees like Ananus and Josephus were not the men for that desperate work. Vespasian's conquest of Galilee in the summer of 67 was answered by the Zealots with frightful massacres in Jerusalem, and thenceforth they held a reign of terror. In the midst of this Vespasian was saluted emperor and called away to Italy, so that the army under Titus could not finally enclose the city till near the passover of 70. The Zealots had wasted their strength in murderous faction fights; but now their civil strife was stilled in furious resistance to the Gentile. The walls were manned with desperate enthusiasts, but the misery within was horrible. He that remained in the city was devoured by the famine, the sword, and the pestilence, and he that fell away to the Romans was crucified, or at the least reduced to slavery. Step by step the obstinate resistance was overcome, though each successive post was

defended week by week with stubborn courage and increasing desperation. Early in August the temple itself was reached. Its outer colonnades were lines of smoking ruins when the Romans pushed on to the assault of the Sanctuary, and were presently fighting their way through piles of corpses towards the Holy Place. Surely now the long-delayed deliverance could be delayed no longer. But heaven was silent on that day of horror. No angel came to rescue the helpless crowd which cowered round the altar of burnt-offering. The flames swept onward, and the Romans in their fury did the rest. With the capture of the Upper City in September the destruction of Jerusalem was completed. A band of Zealots still held the fortress of Masada by the Dead Sea for more than two years, and slew each other and their families by common consent when they could hold it no longer. Two women crept out of their hiding-places as the Romans entered; the last sad tale of Jewish desperation was told, and the war was at an end.

Vespasian and Titus held a splendid triumph in 71. The vessels of the temple figured in the procession, and there was a grand show of beasts, and of Jews for them to devour. Meanwhile, Judæa lay desolate—Galilee had suffered less—and was thinly repeopled with colonies of veterans. To mark the complete subjection of Israel, it was ordered that the half-shekel which every Jew paid to the temple should now be paid to Jupiter Capitolinus. But there was no attempt to stamp out the religion. Riots there were, and many Jews were slaughtered in sundry cities, and the schismatic temple at Leontopolis was destroyed; but there was no persecution. Jews like Josephus or Agrippa, who

frankly accepted the Roman supremacy, lived in favour with the court, and Titus himself would gladly have given the world a Jewish empress in Agrippa's sister Berenice.

There is no more marked pause in history than at the convulsions which ended the Apostolic age. Even the Empire emerges from them greatly changed, and society was never again quite what it had been. In a few short years the churches had been separated from the shelter of Judaism, from the toleration of the Empire, and from the guidance of apostles. It was rather a pause than a break, for the separation was in no case quite complete. Judaizers remained to connect the Church with the synagogue, the Empire wavered in its action, and two or three of the apostles lingered on for thirty years. Still the day of the Lord had come, the judgment was fulfilled, the older age of the world was ended, and the new was hardly yet begun. "Little children, it is the last time." Peradventure Nero might return as Antichrist.

Books

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CHAPTER VI

THE FLAVIAN PERIOD

The reigns of the three Flavii—Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian (69-96)—may be grouped together as a first section of the larger period which goes down to the murder of Commodus in 192. They have a strong family likeness, notwithstanding the personal contrast of Domitian with the others, and form as clear a time of transition in the Empire as in the Church.

The elevation of Vespasian was of itself a serious breach in the system of Augustus. Whatever service the Julian legend might have done in the early days of the Empire, it could give no divinity to the prosaic soldier who was now to wear the purple. Vespasian came of an obscure family in the Sabine country, and never got rid of his rustic speech and penurious habits. He was simply a tough old general, who had driven the Britons from the wastes of Dartmoor and the Zealots from the hills of Galilee; and there was not a touch of romance or genius about him. He died with a scoff on his lips at the deification to come. Yet was he the chosen of the legions, the accepted of the senate, the undisputed master of the Empire, the impersonation of the glory of the world and Rome. Therefore, he too must be divine. Only the divinity of the emperors henceforth must rest on the naked fact of power, without support from any

courtly tales of their descent from antiquated gods. Indeed, the Apologists were not far wrong in ranking them above the gods. "Our Lord and God Domitian" was a truer and more present deity than Jupiter, and more dangerous to his blasphemers than all the gods together.[1]

Vespasian's reign (69-79) was quiet, and needs little notice. His government was marked by sober common sense and strict economy. It was neither brilliant nor enterprising (a few great buildings excepted), but it gave the Empire its needed rest. In all directions the hard realities of fact were displacing the graceful fictions of Augustus. Client states were rapidly disappearing. Thrace and the Lycian confederation had been annexed by Claudius; Vespasian annexed Commagene, and King Agrippa's death in 100 (just beyond the Flavian period) placed nearly the last of them in Trajan's hands. The Greek cities retained a good deal of independence, and Athens and others were still in theory the equal allies of Rome. Once the Athenians complimented Domitian with the archonship; Hadrian held the office twice, and even Constantine was a strategos of Athens in the direct succession of Themistocles and Phocion. But these were only survivals: the Empire as a whole was rapidly coming under the direct control of a single vast administration. The need of economy and firmer government was urgent. The squanderings of Nero and the damages of civil war had to be repaired by financial reforms and heavy taxation; for no emperor could venture on the radical cure of abolishing the largesses at Rome.

[1] Tert. *Apol.* 28 Citius denique apud vos per omnes deos, quam per unum genium Caesaris pejeratur. Cf. Martial viii. 2.

Vespasian's "avarice" disgusted even Alexandria, which had hailed him emperor. Nor was he more in favour with the senate. He treated it with formal respect, and stopped the informations; but he controlled it more than ever by systematically naming consuls for short periods, and freely using the powers of the censorship he undertook in 73 to fill up the Curia with Italians and provincials. Society was even more offended by his refusal to punish the informers. The philosophers played with treason as usual; so Stoics and Cynics were banished the city. Helvidius Priscus was put to death for his seditious discourses; the Cynic Demetrius was exiled, but his further provocations were overlooked. Vespasian "would not kill a dog for barking."[1] The Empire was not yet firm enough entirely to ignore the republican reactionists.

Titus (79-81) will not detain us long. He reversed his father's policy by heaping favour on the senators, and giving up the informers to their revenge. But whether policy or weakness made him turn his back on his past life, he had neither time nor health to make any lasting impression. It was otherwise with his successor. Domitian (81-96) commonly ranks with Nero as a pure and simple tyrant; but he comes nearer to his model Tiberius as an able administrator and a deep dissembler. Domitian's also was a leaden reign; and it was his own work, for there was no Sejanus. He had hard fighting on the Danube, and met with some serious reverses; but upon the whole he dealt successfully with Dacians and Marcomanni. Greedy as he was of military glory, his policy was not aggressive. He

[1] Dio lxvi. 13.

made a treaty with Decebalus, and recalled Agricola from his barren victories and dreams of conquest in Britain. Domitian was also a genuinely religious man—in the heathen sense, not in ours—and for a long time the last imperial champion of the good old Roman discipline. He firmly refused the un-Roman offer of his niece in marriage, though he had no scruple in seducing her from her husband. But the special feature of Domitian is his pride of power. He had stood next the throne for years in vain; and now that power was his, he meant to use it to the full. He set himself systematically to abase the senate, settling important affairs without consulting it, taking knights into his council, and assuming the censorship for life. His manner was proud and distant—here again he is like Tiberius — and his procurators were allowed to speak of him as *dominus ac deus*. Even the mob had no enthusiasm for an emperor so unlike Nero, so that he was forced to lean on the army. At last he could trust nobody, and only maintained himself by a reign of terror, striking down capriciously first one and then another. The highest nobles were the likeliest victims, and never so likely as when Domitian seemed most friendly. In the end his wife Domitia turned against him, and got him assassinated (September 96).

As regards the Christians, Domitian's policy was a continuation of his father's. Hostile as he must have been, he does not seem for a long time to have troubled himself much about them. The Christian question was not even yet entirely disentangled from the Jewish. When the grandsons of Jude, the Lord's brother, were brought before him as descendants of David, he asked them what property they had. Only

a small farm of 7 acres worth 9000 drachmas, which they worked themselves, shewing him their horny hands. And about the kingdom? It was not worldly and earthly, but spiritual and future. Domitian scornfully dismissed them.[1] It was not till near the end of his reign that he took active steps; and these were rather incidents of the general terror than a persecution of Christians as such like Nero's. Indeed a less suspicious temper than Domitian's might have taken alarm at the appearance of "Jewish superstition" in high society, and close to the throne. Domitian's own niece Domitilla was a Christian, and so was her husband Flavius Clemens, his cousin and colleague in the consulship of 95. Domitian put him to death as soon as he was out of his consulship, and tried to make Domitilla marry again, but finally banished her to Pandateria.[2] But there is no trace of meaner victims, or of any unusual persecution outside Rome.

The Church was changing even faster than the Empire. Persecution was now the policy of the state; yet it was not thoroughly worked. If the churches were unlawful societies, the officials were

[1] Hegesippus, *ap.* Eus. iii. 20.

[2] His wife Domitilla was undoubtedly a Christian. For Clement himself we have; (1) Dio 67, 14 executed for *ἀθεότης* and Jewish practices, which would be Dio's phrase for Christianity; (2) Sueton. *Dom.* 15 *hominem contemtissimae inertiae*, which is no description of a Jewish proselyte, but exactly suits a Christian in the impossible position he would have held. So Bruttius the Christian chronicler quoted by Eus. iii. 18, though not by name.

For the date of his execution; Dio puts it in 95, Suetonius says *tantum non in ipso ejus consulatu.* That Domitian waited for the Kalends of January seems proved by the scandal caused even in Julian's time (Ammianus xxii. 3, 4) by the prosecution of Taurus during his own consulship. *Consulatu Tauri et Florentii inducto sub praeconibus Tauro* was too outrageous, and the trial had to be put off.

Glabrio, who was also put to death by Domitian, may have been a Christian likewise; but his case is less certain.

not therefore bound to hunt them out; and if individuals were sometimes molested as Jews, they might also sometimes escape as Jews. The reaction from Nero's cruelties might even dispose officials to connivance, for all had not a Tacitean gluttony of slander. It is likely enough that Vespasian was no friend of the Christians, if they came in his way; but we cannot charge him with active persecution on the sole authority of Hilary of Poitiers.[1] Local persecution there must have been, for it never entirely ceased; but our scanty information shews no trace of anything like a deliberate and general policy. Even when Domitian took the sword in hand again, his work was more capricious terrorism than systematic persecution.

In other respects also the Flavian period is one of rapid change. We see in it the old age of the last apostles, the close of the New Testament writings, and the beginnings of Christian literature. It was no time of quiet or uniformity. The tendencies which issued in the multifarious heresies of the next century were already working in the churches. One stage indeed of the Jewish controversy was ended; but the Jewish spirit was as active as ever. The circumcision question was settled, and sacrifice was now impossible. St. John could speak of them "which say they are Jews and are not," and in his Gospel he steadily treats "the Jews" as outsiders and enemies. But the Jewish spirit shewed itself in fables and endless genealogies, in legal ways of thinking and legal observances, which often passed into asceticism, and generally in that effort to separate the power of the Gospel from its historic facts which

[1] *Contra Auxent.* 3. It *may* be true; but it is doubtful at best.

issued on another side in Gnosticism. False apostles and false prophets had gone forth into the world unsent, and wandered among the churches, taking money for themselves and ordering *agapae* for their own satisfaction.[1] So deeply was the apostolic name discredited that the *Teaching* actually lays down the rule that an "apostle" who stays more than two days is a false prophet. This may be the reason why St. John never calls himself an apostle, and is never so called in the second century, when mentioned alone.[2] The impostors naturally fared differently in different churches. At Ephesus for example false apostles had been tried and found liars; but other bad characters were allowed at Pergamus, and more than tolerated at Thyatira.

Long steps must also have been taken towards the settling of church order. We trace Christian hymns even in the New Testament, and a nascent liturgy in Clement of Rome; and the beginnings of episcopacy cannot reasonably be put later than the end of the century. Something also must have been done towards harmonizing the various forms of apostolic teaching into the general resultant we meet in the next century. St. Paul is so conspicuous in the New Testament that we are apt to take for granted that his teaching remained supreme, at least in the churches he founded. The Epistle to the Hebrews

[1] The picture implied by the *Teaching* 11 is fully confirmed by the hints of Jude and 2 Joh.

[2] This hint I owe to Mr. H. T. Purchas *Johannine Problems*—a most suggestive work, though far from wholly sound. I cannot *e.g.* identify Nathanael with John, or believe that episcopacy spread in spite of the apostle's disapproval. The statement in the text seems true for what we know of Papias, Irenæus, Polycrates, Theophilus, and the Muratorian Fragment. Theophilus, however, is writing to a heathen, so may have had another reason. It has been denied that Polycrates means the apostle: but surely he meant ὁ ἐπὶ τὸ στῆθος τοῦ κυρίου ἀναπεσών for one of the Twelve.

might have warned us of the error; but the literature of the next generation shews it in glaring colours. The *Teaching* is Judaistic in its legalism; and if Barnabas is no Judaizer, neither is he Pauline. Even Clement has not caught the apostle's spirit, though he is full of the apostle's language. Perhaps his very moderation led him to tone down such daring thoughts. Certain it is that many of them were lost at the outset, or rather never truly understood. They are the thoughts of a mystic; and the writers of the next age are not mystics. They are the thoughts of a Jew; and even the Greeks who sought for wisdom could not quite get hold of them—far less the Latins who went back to law. Thus his vision of a Christian Empire vanished till it was seen again by Origen, and his confidence in the power of faith remained almost unechoed till the Reformation. Upon the whole, the Christianity of the next age was Petrine and disciplinarian,[1] though it had Pauline and Johannic touches. But it was Petrine Christianity diluted.

There is no more striking contrast in the whole range of literature than that between the creative energy of the apostolic writers and the imitative poverty of the subapostolic. Contrast St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians with that of Clement, or even better, the Epistle to the Hebrews with that of Barnabas. They set before us the same question about the relation of the Law to the Gospel, and give the same general answer to it: but while the Epistle to the Hebrews is a masterpiece, Barnabas is a sad bungler. The remains of the subapostolic age are mostly the occasional writings of busy men, and

[1] The phrase, and some of the thought, is due to Dr. Bigg, 1 *Peter* p. 37, etc.

in language and purely religious interest they are near akin to the New Testament; but there the likeness ends. The difference of canonical and uncanonical, so studiously ignored by some of the literary critics, is not a fiction of some church authority, but a fact which no serious reader can fail to notice. True, the simple earnestness of the uncanonical writers often gives them a strange force and beauty; but we miss the spiritual depth and the intellectual force and clearness of the New Testament. If Ignatius is a partial exception, his words are rather sparkles of intense conviction than utterances of any profound thought. In general these writers are not more uncritical than the heathens of their time; and they shew much less leaning to superstition. For example, they have no belief in the omens and astrology so conspicuous with the heathens. But they are neither historians nor philosophers nor rhetoricians. They write without an eye to effect, and without a thought of the future, but simply because they have something to say for the present; and their earnest and simple faith contrasts well with the mannerism of Seneca, the malice of Tacitus, the cynicism of Lucian. It has a beauty of its own, and is no unworthy afterglow of apostolic times.

The subapostolic age is upon the whole the obscurest period of Church History. Its remains are not only scanty, but tell us singularly little of what was going on; and even if the whole of its literature had come down to us, we have no reason to suppose that it was extensive. Later writers know strangely little of it, and in their ignorance readily transfer to the subapostolic age the ideas of their own times. Thus Irenæus falls into some bad mistakes, and even

Eusebius gets his knowledge as often as not from writings which are still in our hands, so that there are many subjects on which he evidently knows no more than he tells us, and therefore no more than we know —and sometimes it may be rather less than we know.

Not more than three of the subapostolic writers can be placed in the Flavian period. Clement certainly falls inside it, and perhaps also the *Teaching* and Barnabas: but Ignatius and Polycarp, the writer to Diognetus, Hermas, Papias, and the Second Epistle of Clement belong to the second century, and forgeries bearing the names of Clement, of Ignatius, and of Dionysius the Areopagite cover the whole space of time from the second or third century to the ninth.

To complete our view of subapostolic literature, we must add a crowd of apocryphal Gospels, Acts, Epistles and Apocalypses. In most cases they are lost, or only fragments are preserved, and some of them never were more than fragments. Though some were forged in support of particular doctrines, chiefly Gnostic or otherwise ascetic, the more part seem to have been written as pure and simple novels. They delight in descriptions of the things which Scripture has left untold, like the events of our Lord's infancy or of his descent into Hades, the adventures of the apostles who were not pillars, or the torments of damnation. Only a few belong to the second century, and some even of these have only reached us in later forms, purged of heresy and adorned with fresh inventions. The taste for fiction was as strong in those days as in our own, and we can trace it in some of the Western readings of our Gospels. In any case, a large amount of legend would naturally have been

current in very early times. Thus the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* shew so minute and accurate a knowledge of Lycaonia in St. Paul's time as compels us to bring back the kernel of the story to the first century.[1] Some too of the Logia lately found in Egypt may be early; but all the apocryphal Gospels known to us belong to a later stage than the canonical.

If "The Teaching of the Lord by the Twelve Apostles to the Gentiles" is not the very earliest work of Christian literature, it is at any rate one of the earliest.[2] It is quoted as scripture by Clement of Alexandria, and by the Latin writer *de aleatoribus*: and though Eusebius rejects it from the canon, he implies (what Athanasius expressly states) that it was read in some churches for the benefit of catechumens. It must therefore have had a fair circulation in early times; yet all traces of it vanished till a copy was discovered by Philotheus Bryennius, then metropolitan of Serræ, in 1875, and published in 1883.

[1] Ramsay *Ch. and Empire* 375-428.

[2] Dr. Bigg in his translation (1898) makes the *Teaching* a romance of the fourth century, and ingeniously suggests a Montanist origin, perhaps in Phrygia. Whatever be the explanation of the *Teaching's* stringent rules for apostles, I must doubt whether a fourth century romancer would not have diverged much more widely from facts otherwise known. Even Eusebius could scarcely have passed this ordeal, though a Montanist might have been helped by his conservatism. But is it true that "among Sozomen's Montanists we find no presbyters"? The Pepuzians of Epiphanius (*Haer.* xlix. 2) had women parallel to men in all offices, including the presbyter's. I cannot accept Dr. Bigg's "absolute demonstration" that the *Teaching* borrows from Hermas or from the *Didascalia*. Does "Confess ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ" imply a church building any more than "coming together ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ" (1 Cor. xi. 18)? May not the baptism by affusion and the absence of reserve consist with a very early as well as a very late date? May not the relation of the *Teaching* to *Barnabas* and the *Church Order* be cleared up by the theory that the Two Ways was an earlier manual? Dr. Bigg does not mention an apparent quotation of the *Teaching* by the *de aleatoribus* 4, and sets aside a little too summarily the references of Eusebius and Athanasius. He urges that the *Teaching* is not a book Athanasius would have recommended for instruction. Perhaps not: but if "the fathers" recommended it for use, Athanasius might not have felt bound to abolish it.

The *Teaching* naturally falls into two sections—one on the Two Ways, the other of directions on church order. The account of the Way of Life is in the main modelled on the Sermon on the Mount; but it contains plain traces of Jewish thought, like the stress laid on reverence for teachers, which reminds us of Ecclesiasticus, and the curious theory that falsehood leads to theft—both commonplaces of the Talmud—and touches of a legal and unspiritual character, like directions to fast for the persecutors, or to abstain from bodily (not only carnal) desires,[1] and the importance attached to almsgiving, and the twice-repeated command—Bear what thou canst, but at any rate abstain from things offered to idols. It reminds us of Akiba's permission to forbear the law in time of persecution, if only idolatry, fornication, and things offered to idols were avoided. Upon the whole the tone is essentially Christian, though deeply influenced by Jewish thought. Yet the Jews themselves are denounced as hypocrites who offer wrong prayers, and fast on Monday and Thursday instead of Wednesday and Friday. The Way of Death follows with a black list of vices in St. Paul's style. "From all these, children, may ye be delivered." Then come the directions on church order. Baptism is to be administered in flowing water by preference, though triple affusion will suffice; but always in the name of the Trinity. The parties shall fast before the ceremony. Fast twice in the week (not on the hypocrites' days) and use the Lord's Prayer thrice daily. Then come forms of blessing for the cup and the bread in the Lord's Supper, and a command that none but the baptized are to partake, "for concerning

[1] Contrast 1 Pet. ii. 11 *σαρκικῶν*.

these things the Lord has said, Give not that which is holy to dogs." Then a form of thanks "after ye are filled," which shews that the Lord's Supper was not yet separated from the evening *Agape*. But the prophet is not tied to any form. Concerning apostles and prophets, receive an apostle as the Lord: but if he stay a third day or ask for money, he is a false prophet. A prophet who speaks in the spirit is not to be tempted, for this is an unpardonable sin; the only question is whether he has the manner of the Lord. An approved prophet is not to be judged if (without teaching others to do the like) he does something strange as a worldly mystery typical of the church. "With God he has his judgment; for even thus the old prophets did." But if he orders a special *agape* and eats of it himself, or if he asks for money (unless to give to others) he is a false prophet. If a true prophet desire to settle among you, he is worthy of his meat. Firstfruits, then, of wine-vat and threshing-floor should be given to the prophets, "for they are your high priests"; and to the poor if there are no prophets. So too receive every Christian who comes to you; but see that he is not an idler. Every "Lord's day of the Lord" assemble to break bread, first confessing your sins, that your offering may be pure—and shut out them that are at variance with each other—for this is Malachi's prophecy of a pure offering.[1] Appoint for yourselves worthy men as bishops and deacons, for they also serve you with the service of prophets and teachers. Take heed for one another, and be watchful for the deceiver of the world and for the coming of the Lord.

The *Teaching* must be dated early, if we may

[1] Mal. i. 11: similarly misused by Justin, Irenæus, etc.

judge by its simple tone, its curious mixture of Judaism with opposition to Judaism, and by the absence of any clear quotations from the New Testament. There are parallels to the first and third Gospels, as in Clement, and there are echoes of St. John in the Eucharistic Prayer, but there is no trace of St. Paul's influence. Baptism is very simple, with no fixed times, no elaborate catechumenate, no official performer, no trace of a creed, and no mention of infants. Church government also is in a primitive stage. Apostles are discredited and nearly extinct, as we see from the stringent and unpractical rules about them. Even prophets are dying out, and bishops and deacons are taking their place. Presbyters are not mentioned, at least under that name, and there is no sign of a monarchical bishop. There is no allusion to Gnosticism, or for that matter, to Chiliasm; and though we see the sort of soil on which Montanism arose, there seems to be no trace of Montanism itself. All this points to a very early stage of church history, though the date may be later in so rustic a district as is implied. It must be earlier than Clement of Alexandria, and is most likely very much earlier. The crucial question is its relation to the Epistle of Barnabas, which Lightfoot dates in the reign of Vespasian. We have the Two Ways in Barnabas as well as in the *Teaching*, and the indications of relative date seem conflicting and obscure. Perhaps both texts rest on some earlier Jewish manual; and in that case we can draw no conclusion.

For the locality, it was certainly written for some simple country-side, most likely in a mountainous district. This is all that we can say; and it leaves

open the back parts of Syria and Asia Minor, and perhaps Upper (not Lower) Egypt.

The Epistle ascribed to Barnabas does not seem genuine. It is accepted indeed as scripture by Clement of Alexandria and Origen, though Eusebius counts it uncanonical.[1] Nor can we be sure that its trifling allegorism and cabbalistic use of numbers is fatal. But his discussion of the *Greek* letters for the number 318 (τιη—the cross) is suspicious; and it is hard to see how a Levite like Barnabas could make serious mistakes about the ceremonial of the Law, or how St. Paul's companion could suppose that the apostles were "lawless above all sin," or so far contradict him as to say that the Law was never meant to be outwardly observed at all. Its date lies between the two Jewish wars (70-131), and has to be found from its mention of the "three kings in one" destroyed by the Little Horn. Lightfoot refers this to Vespasian and his two sons associated with him, who were to be overthrown by Nero returning as Antichrist. The date will then be 70-79. Its chief interest is the view taken of the meaning of the Law. According to St. Paul, the Law was temporary, while the writer to the Hebrews makes it symbolical; but they agree that it was a stage of preparation for the Gospel, imperfect indeed, but none the less divine. Barnabas however has no such historical perspective. The divine law was purely spiritual from the very first. External rites like circumcision or sacrifice are no part of it, but suggestions of an evil angel. So of the sabbath or distinction of meats. They were never meant for literal observance, only as allegories of moral duty.

[1] Eus. iii. 25 ἐν τοῖς νόθοις.

Clement of Rome is a mighty figure in legend, from the novels of the third century to the Decretals of the ninth. His connexion indeed with the "Second Epistle" is accidental,[1] and the Clementine Liturgy does not bear his name; but the Recognitions, the Homilies, the Apostolical Constitutions, and the Epistles to Virgins all profess to come from Clement's hand. But the only genuine work remaining to us is the Epistle of the church of Rome to the church of Corinth. This may pretty safely be dated within the year 96,[2] for the persecution to which it alludes can hardly be any other than that of Domitian. Of its author we know next to nothing, for we can hardly identify him like Origen with the Clement mentioned by St. Paul.[3] Some see in him Domitian's cousin Flavius Clemens, who, as we have seen, was certainly a Christian; but if the bishop of Rome had been so great a personage, we should have heard a good deal more about the matter. We may therefore set down our author as some freedman of Flavius Clemens, and as of Jewish birth, if we may judge from his knowledge of the Old Testament. We are also told by Irenæus that he was the third bishop of Rome; and this may be true, though he was in any case no bishop of the Ignatian type,—much less of the papal sort. It is the *church* of Rome which speaks throughout the letter,

[1] In words I have heard from Lightfoot's lips, "It is not an Epistle, and it is not by Clement; but it is to the Corinthians." It seems to be a sermon preached at Corinth about the middle of the second century. Harnack *A.C.L.* i. 438 takes it for the letter of Soter from Rome *cir.* 170. This seems too late: nor does the "Epistle" correspond to the account given by Dionysius *ap.* Eus. iv. 23.

[2] I cannot follow Harnack, *A.C.L.* i. 254 in dating the letter at the beginning of the persecution. His own quotations, cf. *τὰς γενομένας συμφορὰς* and 59 *λύτρωσαι τοὺς δεσμίους* (if it be safe to press them), point the other way. But in no case can it be pushed far into the reign of Nerva.

[3] Phil. iv. 3.

for Clement never names himself. Nor does even the church claim any sort of jurisdiction over Corinth. Earnest and urgent as its exhortations are, they are no more than might in reversed circumstances have been addressed from Corinth to Rome.

Clement is no genius. His power lies not in grasp of mind, but in quiet moderation and self-respect. His letter owes not a little of its impressiveness to his dignified reticence. Even the persecution is barely alluded to as "the sudden and repeated calamities that overtook us," and in the significant warning that "we too are in the same lists" with "the good apostles" who perished before. The keynote of the letter is harmony, for Clement is continually repeating the word and illustrating it.[1] The Corinthians had gone after faction, and turned certain presbyters out of office. The whole is an expansion of St. Paul's, Now I beseech you, brethren, that ye all say the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you.[2] He directly appeals to St. Paul's Epistle, and works out in his own way several of its leading thoughts, especially charity, the body and members, and the resurrection. From another point of view, the Epistle is visibly modelled on the Epistle to the Hebrews, and may be viewed as an expansion of the

[1] Our authorities for the text of Clement are

A (v.) *Codex Alexandrinus* of N.T. Containing nine leaves out of ten, the ninth being lost: published 1633. Text good.

C (1056) *Codex Constantinopolitanus*. Complete. Discovered by Bryennius, and published 1875. Text inferior.

S (*cir.* 1170)—a Syriac translation. Complete: published 1876. Text good: better than C.

L (sæc. xi.)—a Latin translation. Complete: published 1894 (*Anecdota Maredzoliana*). The translation itself dates back (Harnack *Th.L.Z.* 1894, 159) to about 150. Text good.

The four MSS. seem quite independent. We have also now a Coptic version, not yet published.

[2] 1 Cor. i. 10.

chapter on the heroes of faith. Traces of the Gospels are not clear. His quotations remind us of the First and Third alternately, and may be either from them or from oral sources. The Old Testament is still his Bible, and he quotes it freely. It is significant that he uses the Proverbs much more than do the canonical writers. The only feature of Clement's mind which can be called original is his deep sense of the order and beauty of Nature: and in describing this he often rises into real eloquence. Such a sense is not common in early Christian writers, who were more occupied with the divine than the natural side of things. It is no doubt allied to the Roman sense of law; yet it may be one more reminder that in character as well as language, modern Italy represents rather the lower than the higher classes of the Empire. Otherwise Clement's doctrine is a colourless mixture of all the New Testament types except St. John's. St. Paul is the master he has set himself to follow, and, so far as language goes, he is very Pauline: but he plainly does not understand St. Paul's deeper thoughts. For example, Justification by faith is much too bold a doctrine for Clement.[1]

The age of the apostles was not yet quite ended. The Lord had promised that some of them should not taste of death till they had seen the coming of the Son of Man; and some of them did survive the judgment of Jerusalem, though not in Palestine. Now that the temple was destroyed, the Gentile churches took the lead in Christendom, and its centre was shifted to Asia. Thither came Philip of Bethsaida, with his three daughters, to end his days at Hierapolis

[1] Clement *Ep.* 10, 11, 12 *διὰ πίστιν καὶ φιλοξενίαν* of Abraham and Rahab, *διὰ φιλοξενίαν καὶ εὐσέβειαν* of Lot. This differs entirely from St. Paul's *διὰ πίστεως*.

on the Lycus; and with him perhaps his old companion Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. Somewhere near them may have been Aristion and the elder John, and peradventure others of the Lord's disciples, who could still tell of the things they had seen and heard some fifty years and more ago. But Ephesus was the home of the apostle John. He was still at Jerusalem when the apostolic conference was held, and may not have left the city till shortly before the Roman war—perhaps as late as 64, which chances to be the legendary date of the Virgin's departure from this life. Though we cannot trace him in Asia during St. Paul's lifetime, he must have come shortly afterwards, for exile at Patmos probably means *relegatio* by the proconsul of Asia. He was then released after Nero's death; and henceforth Ephesus was the centre from which he surveyed the churches, and pondered that which he had seen and heard and handled of the word of life.

It was not for nothing that the Lord had loved him. Year by year the old words were ripening in that stern and thoughtful mind, as one dark saying after another shone out before him in the mystic light of truth. In the Apocalypse his images are still carnal. The judgment he looks for comes from without, and is a future fact of history which all the world will see. In the Gospel it cometh not with observation. It is a self-executing spiritual judgment, a present fact of the eternal world. In the Apocalypse Christianity is the fulfilment of Judaism, so that the contrast is with false religions: in the Gospel it is the eternal truth, so that the contrast is the timeless one of light and darkness. The Apocalypse has visions of Christ's future coming with the clouds of heaven: the

Gospel shews the everlasting meaning of his one historic coming by throwing history—the record of his many comings—on a background of eternity.[1] So too the contrast of the Gospel with the Synoptists is not merely of authorship, of form, of substance, or of standpoint. It is the contrast of one age of the world with another.[2] The Old Testament gathered Egypt and Assyria round Israel, the New brought Israel itself and Greece and Rome before the cross of Christ; and now Jerusalem had ceased to be the centre of God's dealings with the world. St. Paul could look through Israel to the great evolution beyond and around Israel; but he never forgot that he was an Israelite himself. But St. John in his later

[1] Westcott *St. John's Gospel* lxxxiv.

[2] The evidence for St. John's authorship seems strong for the Apocalypse, and even stronger for the Fourth Gospel. Polycarp and Papias used the Epistle, which cannot be separated from the Gospel by any serious criticism; and I see no reason to suppose Irenæus mistaken, either in his memory of Polycarp or in his knowledge of general Christian belief. Of this however presently. The internal evidence (and there is a good deal of a very cogent sort) points clearly to a Palestinian Jew who had lived before the fall of Jerusalem. There is very little Greek in it beyond the actual language, for the incarnate Logos differs *toto cœlo* from the idealizing Logos of Philo. I find in it neither a thought nor an allusion which calls for a second-century date, but many things which could not have been written in the second century. There is no insuperable difficulty, unless we assume that whatever seems miraculous must be explained away at any cost. The difference from the Synoptists is partly a personal difference of presentation, partly a real difference of teaching corresponding to the difference of scene, of hearers, and of readers.

The Apocalypse is a harder question. But we may safely say that its difference from the Gospel is very much what we should expect if it was written soon after St. John's arrival in Asia, while the Gospel dates from quieter times, perhaps twenty years later, when his thoughts were ripened and his Greek was improved. But if the apostolic authorship and the Domitianic date are incompatible, Hegesippus and Irenæus are much more likely to be mistaken on the date than on the author. But see on Hegesippus (*ap.* Eus.) Lawlor *Journ. Sacred Studies* viii. 436, and on Irenæus, Bishop Chase, *ditto* p. 431, who maintains (after Hort) that it is not the vision but St. John himself that "was seen" near the end of Domitian's reign (Irenæus *ap.* Eus. v. 8) before he was too feeble to go about.

years has ceased to be a Jew. Israel is to him no more than an incident in the revelation of the Word made flesh which culminated in the glory of the Saviour's cross and resurrection. Israel belongs to history; and history is only the manifestation of the eternal on the field of time.

The fact of St. John's residence at Ephesus is attested by four writers of the second century—Irenæus, Clement, Polycrates,[1] and the author of the

[1] There seem to have been two Johns in Asia. Some of the "conservative" critics merge the elder in the apostle; but the distinction inferred by Eusebius from Papias is accepted by writers as widely separated as Lightfoot, Westcott, Harnack, Schmiedel, Bousset, and E. A. Abbott. All parties agree that one John was the centre of Christian life at Ephesus about the end of the first century, that he was the teacher of Polycarp, and that the Fourth Gospel originated at no great distance from Ephesus. But was this John the apostle or the elder?

For the apostle: plain statements of (1) Irenæus, who (*pace* Harnack) heard a good deal about him from Polycarp (2) Polycrates, whose seven kinsmen bishops before him must have reached back for many years (3) Clement of Alexandria, whose story of St. John and the brigand is perfectly credible. From Papias we have nothing explicit—which means that he said nothing to the contrary, for Eusebius neither could nor would have passed over a statement so opposed to the accepted belief of his own time. Nor is there anything to the contrary in Acts xx. 29, unless St. John be taken for one of the grievous wolves; nor in the silence of the Pastoral and Petrine Epistles, of Ignatius, Justin and others. 1 Tim. (even if spurious) may deal with a time before the apostle's coming; and the others had no particular occasion to mention the fact.

For the elder. Harnack, *A.C.L.* i. 651 *sq.*, Schmiedel (*John* in E.B.) Bousset (*Apocalypse* in do.), and E. A. Abbott (*Gospels* in do.). The only argument of weight on this side is the marked avoidance of the apostolic title; and we have seen that this can be accounted for. Even Peter calls himself *συμπρεσβύτερος κ. μάρτυς*, though he does use the title *ἀπόστολος*. The ninth-century quotation from Papias, that John was killed by Jews, would be decisive if it were not a gross and obvious blunder. After its demolition by Lightfoot and Harnack, its revival by Schmiedel and Burkitt is astonishing.

Amongst the difficulties of this theory:—

(1) As it can hardly be supposed that John the elder lay on the Lord's breast or stood by the cross, the eyewitness declarations of 1 Joh. i. 1, and Ev. i. 14, xix. 35 have to be got rid of. Harnack explains them away as "mysticism," taking xix. 35 as *denying* the eyewitness, while Schmiedel makes it an "intentional vagueness" which most people will think worse than a direct lie. Westcott's argument (*Introd.* xxv. *sq.*) holds the field, for neither

Muratorian Fragment; and to these we must now add Hegesippus.[1] There is no reason to doubt it, for the silence of Ignatius is no objection. But they tell us very little of his work. We get a general impression of apostolic superintendence, of fatherly guidance, and of settling of churches; and that is all. His connexion with the growth of episcopacy is best discussed elsewhere: but of stories told of him on good authority, that of his jumping out of the bath to escape Cerinthus quite suits his character, and may very well be true.[2] Again, there is nothing unlikely in Clement of Alexandria's μῦθος οὐ μῦθος of St. John and the robber.[3] Even more in character,

Harnack nor Schmiedel has attempted to answer it. It is strange for example that neither of them notices the change from ἀληθινός to ἀληθής. (2) It also becomes necessary to suppose that Irenæus was mistaken in thinking that his master Polycarp was the apostle's disciple. Schmiedel simply argues that if Irenæus was mistaken about Papias (of whom we have no reason to suppose he had any personal knowledge) he must have been equally mistaken about his own master Polycarp, whom he describes so carefully; while Harnack (with a more logical mind) is obliged also to make Irenæus a mere child who saw practically nothing of Polycarp, and to explain away a thoroughly lifelike picture as a play of fancy. Yet even Bousset "refuses to suppose that Irenæus had already confounded the elder with the apostle."

Some of Schmiedel's oversights are very strange. He finds in Irenæus a tradition of the elders that the Lord lived to be fifty years old, and derives it very reasonably from a misunderstanding of Joh. viii. 57 without seeing the inference, that the Gospel must at all events be older than that tradition. He ridicules the argument that there must be four Gospels because there are four winds of heaven without seeing the fixed belief of the churches behind the personal opinion of Irenæus. True, the argument is "verbal trifling": but no sane man could have used it if the authority of the Fourth Gospel had been seriously disputed in the churches at a time well within his own memory. And the truth of that matter must have been familiar to Irenæus. Why then does he tell us (*Haer.* iii. 11) that some nameless persons (the Alogi probably) denied it, and suppress the very much more important fact (if fact it be) that Papias and Polycarp (who must have known the truth) agreed with them?

[1] Lawlor, *supra*.

[2] Irenæus *Haer.* iii. 3, 4. It need not be discredited because Irenæus did not himself hear it from Polycarp. Epiphanius tells it of Ebion instead of Cerinthus: but Epiphanius can blunder sadly.

[3] Clem. Al. *Quis Dives* 42.

though much later in date, is Jerome's tale that in his extreme old age when he had to be carried to the meetings, he said only, Little children, love one another, on the ground that this was the Lord's command, and if this alone were done, it was enough.[1]

Now that we have come to the end of the first century, we may ask how far Christianity is known to have spread by that time. Of course the Christians were still comparatively few, even where they were most numerous; but they were more numerous in some places than in others. The mother church of Jerusalem never recovered from the effects of the Jewish war; but the Gospel had made good its footing on the coast, and especially in the great city of Antioch, from which it spread eastward over the whole area of the Dispersion and into Parthia. It was firmly settled in the south of Asia Minor, and had reached the north, as we see from Pliny's letter and the Epistle of Peter. But its centre was now proconsular Asia. In Greece it made little progress, except perhaps at Corinth, and the next flourishing community we find is at Rome. But so far both at Rome and in Italy it seems not to have spread far beyond the Greek element of the population. From Rome however it had already reached Gaul and Spain. Of Carthage and Alexandria we hear nothing

[1] Jer. *Comm. in Gal.* vi. 10.

The statement of Polycrates (*ap.* Eus. *H.E.* v. 24) about St. John ὃς ἐγενήθη ἱερεὺς τὸ πέταλον πεφορηκώς is an enigma. We may however safely say (1) that Polycrates is a good authority (2) that St. John was not a priest in the later catholic sense. Polycrates is a strange writer, who may be using a strange hyperbole. May it not be like the *Didache* 13, where the prophets are "your high priests" or Justin *Dial.* 116 where Christians generally are ἀρχιερατικὸν τὸ ἀληθινὸν γένος? Then the πέταλον will be no more than a rhetorical flourish.

yet; but they cannot have been without Christians. In fact, it is not too much to say that Christian traders and Christian soldiers must already have made the Gospel known in every province of the Empire, though it is very likely that no churches had yet been organized beyond the Balkans and the Alps.

Books

See on ch. V.; also Wrede *Untersuchungen zu I. Clem.* Gött. 1891; Harnack *Lehre der 12 Apostel.*

CHAPTER VII

TRAJAN

At first sight there is no very evident reason for the enmity between the Empire and the Church. The Gospel is spiritual, and its Author wrecked his temporal success by refusing to be a rebel. He told the Jews to pay back Cæsar's money into Cæsar's treasury, and satisfied Pilate that his kingdom was not of this world. His disciples taught men to honour the emperor, to obey the powers that be, and to submit themselves for his sake to every ordinance of man; and their followers were a quiet sort of people who kept out of politics and seemed to ask for nothing better than to pay their taxes and be left to themselves. Yet the emperors must have had serious reasons for their enmity. They were certainly not random persecutors. As a rule, they respected the worships of the nations. Even the Druids were not put down systematically, though some of their practices were forbidden by Tiberius and Claudius. Israel again was so dangerous a rival in the East that we can hardly wonder at Hadrian's endeavour to stamp out Judaism. The shortness of the persecution rather speaks for Roman moderation. With these exceptions,[1] only the Christians were seriously

[1] The destruction of the temple of Isis by Tiberius was not so much persecution as the punishment of a gross scandal.

molested before the Manichæan edict of Diocletian in 296 : but the Christians were more or less persecuted by most of the emperors, and with especial cruelty by some of the best of them.[1] How are we to account for this ?

No doubt the victims were sometimes themselves much to blame. No government could overlook lawless acts of violence like upsetting of altars and tearing down of proclamations, or allow such zealots as Tertullian to seduce its soldiers from their service. Nor could it overlook men who shouted wanton defiance, or leave unpunished the outrageous insults it sometimes met with in its own courts of justice. Judges were not always brutes. If some were lovers of cruelty, others did everything they could to save misguided men from their folly. Nor was the martyr always very saintly. It is a long step from the perfect courtesy of Polycarp to the coarseness ascribed to Eulalia.

Much of this offensive conduct was the natural reply of the natural man to the atrocious wrongs of persecution, but some of it must have been without

[1] Melito (*ap.* Eus. iv. 26) tells the emperor Marcus that even Nero and Domitian had only been seduced into persecution by evil counsel, whereas their successors, and Hadrian in particular, had repeatedly checked mob violence. Tertullian *Apol.* 5 develops this into a theory that only the bad emperors were persecutors. He does not pretend that the persecuting laws were ever repealed ; only Trajan "partly defeated them by forbidding search for Christians," and Marcus "openly annulled their penalties" by imposing severer ones on accusers, while the rest were content to leave them unenforced.

The theory was fairly reasonable for Melito, for the Christians were slow to believe that respected emperors like Trajan or Pius were really their enemies. By Tertullian's time its difficulties were greater, for he had Trajan's rescript before him, and could only explain away the persecutions of Marcus by ascribing to him a change of policy.

All along we see the pathetic anxiety of the Christians to make out every decent emperor their friend, and to throw the blame of every persecution on bad counsellors.

excuse. It was not confined to Montanists,[1] but found approval in many quarters. But after all, it was the exception, not the rule, and far too much has been made of it by some writers. In general, the martyr is as innocent of railing as the Lord himself. No unseemly word escapes from Polycarp, or Justin, or Cyprian, and in many other cases we have no reason to think that any such language has been suppressed. Their defence is the single word *Non facio*, or its equivalent; and then comes the *Deo gratias* when the sentence is read to them. Fanatics would seem to have been few, especially in the early stages of the persecutions, and were almost always discouraged by the authorities of the church. Ignatius and Tertullian do not represent the general feeling of Christians, which is better given when the church of Smyrna gravely condemns "such acts of rash and impious daring,"[2] or the Council of Elvira orders that those who provoke the authorities shall not be counted martyrs.[3]

But however fanatics may have helped to embitter the contest, they had very little to do with its origin. Persecution was the natural outcome of a deeply rooted enmity between the Empire and the church, and the best men on both sides were generally the most convinced that the struggle was one of life and death.

There was very little fanaticism on the heathen side. The Empire had no established church, no priestly class, no religious orders, and the priests were very seldom active persecutors, except in the legends. More trouble arose from trade jealousy, like that of

[1] For instance, there is no sign that Agathonice was a Montanist.
[2] Eus. iv. 15 (*Mart. Polycarpi*). [3] *Can.* 60.

the Ephesian silversmiths or the Bithynian graziers. The procurers, the poisoners, the fortune-tellers and the like unholy folk had good reason to complain of the Christians.[1] Much of the persecution arose from the family dissensions which the Lord foretold, and we can understand the hatred of men like Herminianus[2] for the teachers who had stolen away the hearts of their wives. Much again arose from the blind rage of savage mobs against men they hated, though the more part knew not why they hated them. But of genuine fanatical enthusiasm for the gods we hardly find a trace. Julian is the exception which proves the rule, for his fanaticism was a riddle to the heathens themselves.[3]

Yet the murderous instinct of the mobs was not untrue. Harmless as the Christians may seem to us, they were undermining religion, and society with it. The age of nations was at an end only in a political sense. Rome had national gods of her own, and welcomed to her Pantheon all the gods of the nations; and the grateful provinces added the worships of Rome and Augustus, and of the living emperor. Thus the Empire was itself a nation so far, and Cæsar was pledged to maintain the old ideas of society and religion, including the ancient system of national worships enforced by the state. So Mæcenas advises Augustus[4] to hate and suppress innovations in religion as unsuited to a monarchy: and even if

[1] Tert. *Apol.* 43.

[2] Tert. *ad Scap.* 3.

[3] Renan compares the early Christians to "a Protestant missionary in a very catholic Spanish town, preaching against the saints, the Virgin, and the processions." He forgets that few cities of the Empire were in that sense very pagan—least of all the priests. The offence which the Christian gave was very much more political than religious.

[4] Dio Cassius lii. 36.

Dio has invented the words for him, they express truly the ideas of the Empire and Society.

These ideas the Gospel contradicted at every point. In the first place, it was new. Instead of coming down from time immemorial, it had a well-known origin in the prosaic times of Tiberius Cæsar. This alone was enough to condemn it, for in Diocletian's phrase, a new religion ought not to reproach an old one. Then again it was not of civilized origin. It came from the barbarians, and from the worst of all barbarians, those filthy Jews. No wonder that educated men would have nothing to do with it. Jewish monotheism was revolting enough to polite society, but the Jews had somehow got a footing as licensed nonconformists. Moreover, even Judaism was at any rate a national worship, and so far deserved respect, whereas Christianity was mere private self-will and perversity—pure heresy. The Twelve Tables had long ago forbidden Roman citizens to have gods in private, or to worship new or foreign gods unauthorized by the state.[1] That law might be partly obsolete; but the Empire still enforced the substance of it. On one side, all national worships were now authorized—but Jesus was not a national god. On the other, even those who were not Roman citizens were required to shew due respect to the gods of Rome by conforming to the ceremonies of the Roman people—which only the Christians refused to do. Beside this, the churches were secret societies of the lowest of the people, who gave their allegiance to one Jesus as emperor forsooth.[2]

[1] Separatim nemo habessit deos neque novos sive advenas nisi publice adscitos privatim colunto.

[2] Westcott *Epp. of St. John.* Exc. on *The Church and the World.*

This was plain treason, however they might gloss it over; and if there were any doubt, it was set at rest by their refusal of the ordinary worship paid by every good citizen to the gods and the emperor. Had their numbers been trifling, they might have been ignored; but even in Trajan's time there were Christians enough in Bithynia to give serious trouble. This was a growing danger, especially in the East, and it was increased by every lull of persecution which gave them leisure to seduce their neighbours and develop their disloyal aims. The worst of all was their aggressive temper. Even if the Galilean had been a passable god of his kind, it would still have been a crime to despise the worship of his betters. It was intolerable that these miscreants should endeavour to destroy it. The Jews were disrespectful enough to the gods of the civilized world, but even they had the decency to keep their vulgarity to themselves, whereas the Christians could not be satisfied without perverting others, and seducing silly women. They poisoned domestic life, molested trade, and deliberately set themselves to destroy the good old customs on which the Empire and civilization rested. In mere self-defence there was no choice but to put them down. With all their meekness they were the anarchists of their time, and the first duty of the government was to protect society.

The rulers of the Empire would have been more than men if they had risen above these fixed ideas of the ancient world; yet had they only realized the mighty change in history implied by their own universal sovereignty, they would have seen long before the time of Constantine that Christianity

was in truth their best ally. The old republic overcame the nations because they could not govern themselves, and the rise of the Empire was a plain confession that neither could the Roman senate and people govern them. The old political ideals of Rome were for ever shattered when the Italians won their franchise at the sword's point, and the enduring terror of the proscriptions completed their destruction. Liberty was sacrificed to security, and Augustus was welcomed as a Saviour of Society. Thus the Empire was from the first in a false position. It was pledged to maintain the old order of things; yet the necessities of universal power were themselves the greatest of novelties. In spite of republican disguises and conservative reactions the Empire tended steadily and of necessity, in one direction to level the distinctions of society by taking its officials from every rank of life, in another to break down the barriers of nations by receiving all as Roman citizens, in another to obliterate the variety of laws and customs by reasoned principles and uniform administration, and in yet another to supersede local religions by grafting on them the universal worship of the emperor himself. Thus while it belonged historically to the age of nations, its ideals were more akin to the universalism of Christianity. Its efforts to realize them were hampered by the surviving nationalism of the republic, and perverted by the false universalism of its own Cæsar-worship. It was never able to abolish slavery or class legislation, or to weld its heterogeneous peoples into a solid nation. Yet when Diocletian had broken the connexion of the Empire with the city, and reduced the worship of the emperor to a ceremonial of the palace, Constantine was only

completing his work by the adoption of Christianity, and the true affinity of the ancient rivals was shewn by a firm alliance of a thousand years.

There does not seem to have been any special law against the Christians generally before the times of Decius and Valerian. Persecution was a matter of administration and of summary jurisdiction,[1] though forms might be observed when the accused was a senator like Apollonius. There was no need of any special law, for Christianity as a disturbance of the peace was already an offence against the common law of the Empire, and the punishment of Christians was as much a matter of course as the punishment of brigands. It was but a part of the magistrate's ordinary duty to put down summarily[2] these and other forms of disorder. Meanwhile, if the Christians were to be tried in form, there was ample choice of legal charges against them. In the first place, they practised a new and unlawful worship,[3] so that they had none but themselves to thank for any trouble it might bring upon them. Then they were "atheists"[4] for denying the gods of the state. This meant beheading for men of rank, while meaner men were burned or given to the beasts: and it also made free men liable to the rack, the fire and the cross like slaves. Their secret rites were also suggestive of a further charge of magic,[5] for which they could be burned under the *Lex Cornelia*. But the most convenient course was to try them for treason.[6] Men who belonged to unlawful societies[7] were *prima facie* traitors; and they were certainly traitors if they refused the ready test

[1] *Cognitio.* [2] *Coercitio.* [3] *Religio nova et illicita.*
[4] ἄθεοι, *sacrilegi.* [5] *Malefici.* [6] *Majestas.*
[7] *Hetaeriae, collegia illicita.*

of swearing by Cæsar's Genius and doing him loyal worship. In that case they committed treason[1] in open court, and could be sent straight to execution.

From the heathen point of view, the process was quite fair. It was only tendering an oath of allegiance to persons reasonably suspected of treason. It never did practical injustice to the occasional enthusiasts who counted every oath unlawful, because they were always men who had further objections to the particular oath by Cæsar's Genius. Other Christians were sometimes allowed to escape with an oath by Cæsar's safety, which was usually considered harmless.[2] Nor do the Apologists in general complain of it. They complain indeed of the substantial injustice of the persecution, but not of any particular injustice in the test chosen. Only Tertullian[3] raises the captious difficulty that while other malefactors are pressed to confess crime, the Christians are pressed to deny it. He chooses to forget that the object of the court is to make a grievously suspected person disavow secret treason, so that it was not unjust to punish him if he replied with open treason. If that oath was a proper test of loyalty, there is no more to be said.

This was the full process, chiefly used for Roman citizens. But as we have seen, Christians were most commonly dealt with summarily: and then the exact course taken was very much at the magistrate's discretion.

Our next duty is to map out the age of persecution begun by Nero. There is no difficulty in marking for it a natural end at the Edict of Milan in 313;

[1] *ἀσέβεια, impietas circa principes* was a form of *majestas*.

[2] Tert. *Apol.* 32 Sed et juramus, sicut non per genios Caesarum, ita per salutem eorum, quae est augustior omnibus geniis.

[3] *Supra*, c. 2.

but its division into periods is not so easy. The old calculation of ten persecutions was suggested[1] by the analogy of the plagues of Egypt, and is in every way uncritical. The general persecutions were not so many as ten; the local were many more.[2] What is worse, it refers everything to the will of individual emperors, instead of connecting general changes with general causes. Neither can we take the rescript of Trajan in 112 as the beginning of any new policy, though there are landmarks of importance at the persecution of Decius and the rescript of Valerian. According to Prof. Ramsay, the internecine strife of Church and Empire at the end of the apostolic age was softened by Trajan, and still more by Hadrian, but "after Hadrian the development of the imperial idea ended, until he found a successor in Constantine."[3] Thus the main division would fall in the middle of the second century, and the later period would in general be one of reaction, though he has no occasion to discuss it closely beyond the reign of Marcus.

Without disputing the general truth of this view, we may answer that the history of persecution is best connected as closely as possible with the general history of the time, so that the line is most conveniently drawn at the murder of Commodus in 192. In any case we get a good division here; for if the natural development of the Empire came to a political standstill after Hadrian, the religious part of it was vigorously pushed forward by the house of Julia

[1] Orosius *Hist.* vii. 27. He enumerates Nero, Domitian, Trajan, Marcus, Severus, Maximin, Decius, Valerian, Aurelian, Diocletian.

[2] For example, scores at least must have perished in Bithynia about 112: yet no Christian writer knows anything of the persecution but what we find in Pliny's letter. There may have been similar persecutions almost anywhere at any time before 180 without any trace of them being left to us.

[3] Ramsay *Church in the Roman Empire*, p. 192.

Domna. The earlier Emperors shew no sympathy at all with Christianity, so that they check mob violence only from regard to humanity and good order. Commodus on one side, Severus on the other, form a transition. The later period is chequered. The emperors are sometimes led by eclectic ideas to shew more or less favour to the Christians, sometimes driven violently the other way by a Roman reaction. Syrian influences became dominant under Severus, and remained so (except in the short reigns of Macrinus and Maximin) till the defeat of Philip in 249. The next ten or twelve years are covered by the violent reactions of Decius and Valerian, with an interval of quiet between them. Then comes a long peace of more than forty years (260-303), scarcely broken by the hostility of Aurelian at the end of his reign. There remains but one more fearful struggle in the last great persecution (303-313) begun by Diocletian, which brought the long contest to an issue.

Roughly summing up our results, we find two nearly equal periods (70-192, and 192-313) of rather more than a century each—one of constant hostility, the other of persecution alternating with precarious quiet. As regards the first period, the internecine strife which Nero left to his successors was first softened by the humanity of Trajan and Hadrian, then sharpened again by Marcus, and finally allowed to rest by Commodus. Then in the second, we find peace maintained upon the whole for half a century (192-249) by Syrian influences, then ten years of sharp conflict; peace again for half a century (260-303) while the Empire is fighting for its existence, and then another ten years' period of

desperate struggle which brings us down to the Edict of Milan. Only it must be borne in mind that there is a broad difference between the two half-centuries of peace. In the first, the emperors were generally willing to tolerate; in the second, they were generally too busy to persecute. The peace too was at the best of times precarious; for persecution never wholly ceased, and might break out almost anywhere at a moment's notice.

The change in the Empire at the end of the first century is more easily felt than described. Domitian came to his end in a mere conspiracy; yet we feel that something perished with him. If Nerva and Trajan seemed to restore the republican freedom Domitian had trampled down, they dropped the republican religion which Domitian had endeavoured to maintain. It was easier to pay the senate formal or even real deference than to restore the buried past. Domitian was for a long time the last of the emperors who strove to reform the corruption of society by returning to the manners and traditions of antiquity. Such a policy was antiquated even for him, ridiculous when taken up by Decius or Valerian. His successors faced the facts of universal empire, and did their duty not to Rome alone, but to the world they ruled. Even the real reaction marked by Pius was overborne by the onward march of history; and the sober Marcus among the legions of the Danube is further from the ideals of Augustus than the cosmopolitan Hadrian on his restless tours. Yet they were not out of touch with Rome like Maximin or Diocletian. From Nerva to Marcus there was peace between the Empire and society, except for the short time when

Hadrian came back to end his days in Italy. By Commodus that peace was broken. He reminds us of Nero by his weakness and vulgarity, of Domitian by his hatred of the senate; while his taste for Eastern worships points forward to the eclecticism of the next century. Upon the whole however his reign is better treated as an unworthy sequel of his father's than connected with that of Severus.

Nerva is a venerable name, and little more. For a reign of sixteen months (96-98) it was work enough to establish good relations with the senate, put an end to Domitian's prosecutions for treason and "Jewish living," and safely pass on the Empire to the stronger hands of Trajan. With the Christians he had no special concern, though Flavia Domitilla must have returned to Rome with the rest of the exiles.

Though Trajan (98-117) was not a man of genius, he ranks by common consent among the greatest of the emperors. In the coarse inventions of a later age he is represented as a brutal persecutor: but the Christians of the third century strove hard to make him out less hostile to them than he really was. In history we see the conqueror of Decebalus, the great emperor who humbled Parthia as she never was humbled before, and carried the victorious eagles through regions whose very names were half unknown to his wondering senate. It was a doubtful policy to push his conquests so far beyond the limits of Augustus at the Danube and the Euphrates; but there can be no question that Trajan was an administrator of the highest order. If his letters shew few signs of far-seeing statesmanship, they are models of practical good sense and clear-headed prudence. Trajan is a splendid specimen of a

Roman governor at his best. Such a man was too much of a Roman and too much of a soldier to be other than hostile to the Christians, yet too humane and too practical to take pleasure in persecuting them, and rather disposed to leave them alone as much as he safely could. This is what we see in his correspondence with Pliny, which contains all that we know of his personal action against them.

Soon after the middle of his reign, the province of Bithynia needed serious attention. The cities had got into financial straits by excess of public buildings and general rivalry with each other. They were also full of clubs of all sorts, which had already caused much disorder, and were likely to give rise to more. So Trajan chose the younger Pliny as his legate for Bithynia. Sixty questions referred to the emperor in eighteen months (111-112) betray a certain weakness in Pliny:[1] yet he was upright and humane, a good man of business, and well acquainted with the province. He began in his edict by forbidding the existence of clubs. After this he examined the finances of the cities, and went on a tour of inspection. At Amastris he found that the river which ran through the town was an open sewer, and asked permission to cover it up. At Amisus he referred to Trajan the question of a new benefit society: and the answer was that it could not be forbidden in a free city, but must be strictly limited to charitable purposes. The Christians were as open law-breakers as the brigands, and his course was clear enough. Without troubling himself about any special

[1] The tone of Trajan's answers shews that his close supervision of Bithynia must *not* be taken as a fair sample of the regulation of provinces in general by the emperors.

charges against them, he executed summarily those who persistently avowed themselves to be Christians—of course reserving Roman citizens for trial at Rome. So far well: but he came to a difficulty when further anonymous charges were laid before him. They implicated numbers of all ranks and ages in town and country, for the unlawful worship was so widely spread that the temples were almost deserted; and there was no knowing how many more would prove to be involved in it. Moreover, the case was not so simple as it was at first. Some denied the charge entirely, and made good their denial by proper worship of the gods and the emperor's image, and by further cursing Christ. These could safely be set free: but what was to be done with Christians who had given up their Christianity for three, ten or even twenty years? They were sound heathens now, and proved it by the same tests as the others; and when their past life was examined, their Christianity did not appear ever to have been grossly immoral. They used to meet before daylight on a fixed day, and sing by turns a hymn to Christ as a god; and if they bound themselves by an oath, it was not to commit any crime, but to abstain from theft, adultery and the like. In the evening they met again, but their food was quite harmless; and even from this they had absented themselves[1] since Pliny's edict. This, they said, was all. Upon this two women of low rank who bore the honourable name of deaconesses were examined by torture, but no further discovery was made. No abominations came to light, only a perverse and arrogant superstition. So Pliny

[1] In *quod ipsum facere desisse* surely the renegades are only speaking of themselves.

adjourned the case, and hastened to consult the emperor. The question was not what the law meant or whether he was to carry it out, for he was not acting on any special law, nor yet about his competence to punish Christians at his discretion like other disturbers of the peace, but whether it was good policy to go on putting to death as many of them as might be discovered. No monstrous crimes had been found out; and many of them could plead sex or youth, or had long ago repented of their offence. At all events, a milder policy might be worth trial, especially in consideration of the numbers of all ranks implicated.

Trajan answers shortly that Pliny has done well. No general rule can be laid down, so that he must use his discretion. They are not to be sought out; but if they are accused and found guilty, they must be punished. Yet if a man says that he is no longer a Christian, and shews his repentance by worshipping the gods, he is to be pardoned. Anonymous charges however are in no case to be received.

This may be humanity: but it is not toleration. Trajan's care is not for the Christian, though he plainly acquits him of the abominable crimes, but for the heathen who has gone wrong in the past, or is in danger from informers. The Christian remains an outlaw; but the officials are not bound to notice him till some informer brings him into court. Thus he gained a measure of security, for though his life was always at the mercy of an informer, the informer was not always quite free to take it. The heathens themselves in ordinary times had no great liking for the man who brought decent neighbours into trouble; and even where the Christians were few, their bitter hatred was a thing to be considered. Much however

would depend on the temper of provincial governors. If they could not refuse to punish convicted Christians, they could do a good deal to discourage accusers. Tertullian is not wholly wrong when he says that Trajan "partly frustrated" the persecution.

Two martyrs stand out from the nameless crowd who must have perished under Trajan. One of these was Symeon the son of Clopas, whom the apostles had set in the place of James, and who now ruled the church that sojourned in the ruins of Jerusalem. Hegesippus[1] tells us that the Judæan churches had peace under Trajan till some heretics accused Symeon before the consular Atticus. His descent from David was not a very serious charge: but Christianity could not be overlooked, so he was tormented for many days, and finally crucified.

With the other—Ignatius of Antioch—we reach one of the great battles of ecclesiastical controversy. Of late years however it seems settling down into a general acceptance of the seven letters ascribed to him by Eusebius.[2] But we are not here concerned with

[1] Cp. Eus. iii. 32. He regards Symeon as the last of the eyewitnesses and hearers of the Lord: but we need not therefore believe that he was quite 120 years old. The date of the consular Atticus is unknown.

[2] The letters of Ignatius are extant in three forms:—

(1) *Long Recension.* Thirteen letters, including one from Mary of Cassobola to Ignatius. Printed in Latin 1498, in Greek 1557.

(2) *Middle* (or Vossian) *Recension.* The seven letters named by Eusebius *H.E.* iii. 36. Published in Latin by Ussher 1644, the Greek text of six by Isaac Voss 1646, and *Ep. Rom.* by Ruinart 1689.

(3) *Short* (or Curetonian) *Recension.* Three letters. Published in Syriac by Cureton 1845.

The Long Recension was proved by Ussher to be a forgery, and has found few defenders since his time. It is the Vossian with interpolations and six additional letters, and dates (Lightfoot) from the second half of the fourth century.

But were even the Vossian letters genuine? Daillé (1666) attacked them, Pearson (1672) replied; and thenceforth commonly episcopalians defended them, while others held them spurious or interpolated.

Ignatius as the first great champion of episcopacy; only with the light he throws on the policy of Trajan.

The contrast is a striking one, between the calm dignity and lofty reticence of the Roman Clement and the passionate broken sentences of the Syrian martyr on his way to death. Ignatius was a thorough Eastern, despite the Samnite name he bears. Of his life we know next to nothing, though he seems to hint that his conversion was a violent change in full manhood. If he is called an apostolic man, it is not implied that he conversed with apostles, though he may have been old enough to do so; and there is no evidence that he did.[1] He was bishop of Antioch, but we have no authentic accounts of his

The question was complicated by the discovery of the Curetonian letters. Were these the genuine Ignatius, or at least the earlier recension; or were they extracts from the Vossian? On one side stood Cureton himself, Bunsen, Lipsius (1859) etc.: on the other Baur, Hilgenfeld, Lipsius (1873) etc., and especially Zahn and Lightfoot (1885).

It is needless to give more than the shortest outline of the argument for the priority and genuineness of the Vossian Letters. We have (A) *External Evidence* (1) Direct reference by Polycarp, decisive if genuine; quotations in Irenæus and Origen; allusions elsewhere; but no clear trace anywhere of the Curetonian recension. (2) Unquestioned references to the Vossian from Eusebius onward. (B) *Internal Evidence.* It must have been much easier to abridge the Vossian than to expand the Curetonian. (1) If the Vossian letters are earlier, they will be homogeneous: if they are an expansion of the Curetonian, the added matter can be distinguished from the rest. Now (a) they are homogeneous in words and language, (b) they keep the sequence of thought much better than the Curetonian, (c) the doctrine is the same throughout. Add to this (2) the early type of the doctrine, and of the heresies alluded to, (3) a remarkable series of undesigned coincidences in connexion with the journey, (4) the difficulty of accounting for the letters as a later forgery.

This is fairly decisive, for there is nothing much in the doubts whether episcopacy could have been so well developed in the time of Ignatius, or whether he would have been allowed to write letters on his journey. Harnack's attempt to shift his date to the time of Hadrian was not successful: indeed, he has now himself abandoned it.

[1] We need not notice the legend derived from his second name Theophorus, that Ignatius was the child whom the Lord took in his arms. It has not been traced beyond the end of the ninth century.

episcopate. Even of his trial we know only that he was condemned to be devoured of beasts, and sent to Rome for the purpose. He cannot therefore have been a Roman citizen like St. Paul. Presently a company is made up, and he starts on his long journey in charge of ten "leopards," so that the whole distance from Syria to Rome was itself "a beast-fight." At Smyrna he receives deputies from the churches of Ephesus, Magnesia and Tralles, and sends back letters to them; also a letter forward to prepare his friends at Rome for the scene in the amphitheatre. From Smyrna he goes on his way to Troas, whence he writes three more letters to the churches of Philadelphia and Smyrna, and to Polycarp the bishop of Smyrna, on the eve of crossing to Neapolis. Thence to Philippi, where we first find other Christians in his company, doubtless on their way with him to death; and after this we hear no more.

Ignatius is in strong contrast even with his Christian surroundings. His temper is utterly unlike that of Clement, or even of Polycarp. He looks on the Empire in something of St. John's way: but the Evangelist's lofty scorn is turned into a shout of defiance. "Nothing visible is good." The work is not of persuasion, but Christianity must act with a strong hand. As for himself, he is going of his own free will to die for God. May he have joy of the beasts that are prepared for him; and if they will not eat him, he will make them do it. The one fear which torments him is that his Roman friends may try to rescue him from the death he has set his heart upon. Yet these very letters are enough to shew that others thought differently. In the first place,

we have no reason to suppose that there was any such persecution at Antioch, as Pliny records for Bithynia. Again, there cannot have been anything like active persecution at Rome, if he had influential friends who might be able to get his sentence altered. Above all, the exaggerated tone of his letters is evidence enough that his general attitude of defiance to the Empire would not have been everywhere approved. Far be it from us coldly to condemn the fiery words of one who was giving his life for Christ: yet from many signs it is clear that Ignatius is the very last man to be taken as a sample of Christian opinion in his own time.

Books

See V.; also: Franklin Arnold *Zur plinian. Christenverfassung.*

CHAPTER VIII

HADRIAN AND ANTONINUS PIUS

In a few years we look again. The martyr has received his crown; the great emperor too has passed away, and Hadrian reigns in his stead. Trajan's glory was clouded by his repulse from Hatra, and his last days were disturbed by the revolt of Parthia, and by Jewish risings all over the East. The Empire was overstrained by Trajan's wars, and needed rest. So Hadrian made peace with Parthia by drawing back the frontier to the Euphrates, suppressed the risings, and settled down to a life of busy travel and administration. There was peace in the Roman world for forty years, all through the reigns of Hadrian and Pius, till trouble began again on the Euphrates and the Danube in the days of Marcus.

There was just one great break in the long peace. Israel had not been crushed by Titus. If Judæa was ruined, the mass of the nation belonged to the dispersion. The Jews of Galilee had suffered less in the war, those of distant countries very little. Nor was Rome a persecutor. Vespasian had to put down some troubles in Egypt and Cyrene, and closed the schismatic temple of Leontopolis. Insulting as was the payment of the half shekel as a tax for Jupiter Capitolinus he had no plan of persecution. The Jews

were not otherwise molested. Even the Sanhedrin was allowed to meet again in Jamnia, and its president Johanan ben Zaccai kept the peace with Rome. But in the next generation the Jews recovered confidence. The great rabbi Akiba was now the teacher of Israel; and he set himself to stir up all the enemies of Rome, and raise the fires of war all over the East. Trajan's campaigns were watched with malicious interest. The opportunity came in 116, when he was pushing down the Tigris to the Persian Gulf. The Jews rose behind him in Egypt and Cyrene, Cyprus and Osrhoene, and slaughtered Gentiles wholesale. Some 240,000 Greeks are said to have been killed in Cyprus alone. But Rome was still too strong for them. The revolts were crushed out in still huger butcheries of Jews, though they succeeded in shattering Trajan's plans before the walls of Hatra. If Hadrian began with mildness, he soon changed his policy, and set himself to crush out Judaism by persecution. Circumcision was forbidden, Jerusalem turned into a colony of heathen soldiers. The second Jewish war broke out about 132. Bar Cochab[1] was hailed King of the Jews—the last and greatest of the false Messiahs—and soon mastered the chief part of Palestine. Only the Christians refused to help him, and were bitterly persecuted for their loyalty to the Empire. Once again Jewish fanaticism was an overmatch for the legions. First the governor Tineius Rufus was defeated, then two proconsuls of Syria; and Hadrian himself could not check them till he sent to Britain for Julius Severus, and even he was forced to deal with the Jews as

[1] The Son of a Star (Num. xxiv. 17). After his defeat he was called Bar Cozib, the Son of a Lie.

Fabius dealt with Hannibal. Step by step he dislodged them from their lines in Galilee, forced them back on Mount Ephraim without a battle, and finished the war by the capture of Bethar. Bar Cochab perished in the slaughter, and a hideous persecution followed. Akiba was put to death, and Jewish observances were forbidden. So extreme was the danger that the rabbis issued a dispensation from all things but fornication, idolatry, and meats offered to idols. The mere approach of a Jew to the heathen Jerusalem was made a capital crime. The copies of the law were burnt with those who studied them; and the rabbinic succession was only kept up with the utmost difficulty.

The strain did not last long. Though the Jews were anything but loyal subjects, they could not help seeing that there was nothing to be gained by revolt. Rome on her side stopped the persecution after Hadrian's death in 138. The new emperor Titus Antoninus could afford to drop it. So things settled down again, with contemptuous toleration on one side, sullen quiet on the other. Though there were still some Jewish troubles, the great strife of Israel and Rome for the empire of the East was at an end.

If Trajan was the first emperor who came from the provinces, Hadrian (117-138) was the first who devoted himself to the provinces, and was hardly more than a visitor at Rome. Domitian stood for the old religion of Rome, Trajan for her old ambition: Hadrian cared little for either. He was a man of his own age, who preferred peace and literature to war and Roman austerity. He was more Greek than Roman, more cosmopolitan than either, for his restless curiosity embraced all the creeds and cultures and

antiquities of all the peoples of the Empire. He discussed literature and philosophy with the professors, bandied verses with the wits, climbed Etna to see the sunrise, and visited the pyramids like a modern tourist. He was a master of the arts of peace and war, and had the accomplishments of a ruler and a private man. For many-sided culture there was none like Hadrian but Divus Julius before him, and Gallienus after him. But if Hadrian was no such trifler as Gallienus, neither had he Cæsar's genius. As a general, he was familiar with military science in all its range; as a ruler, he inspected every province of the Empire and mastered every detail of the administration;[1] as a man, he misses greatness. With all his brilliant gifts of cleverness and versatility, there is a fatal want of balance in his uncertain temper, his vanity and jealousy, in his dilettantism, and in the contemptuous shallowness which pervades his letter to Servianus,[2] and had long ago brought on him a galling rebuke from Trajan.

[1] While emperor he was prætor in Etruria, held magistracies in sundry Latin towns, was demarch at Naples, quinquennalis at Italica and Hadria, archon at Athens.

[2] Vopiscus *V. Saturnini* 8. There is no special reason to doubt its genuineness. Literary shallowness and scornful scepticism go very well together and with Hadrian. Nor does Dürr *Reisen Hadr.* 88 make out a plausible purpose for the interpolations he suggests.

As regards the one serious difficulty—*Serviano Consuli* (134) in contrast with *filium meum Verum* (136)—something may be added to Lightfoot's argument *Ignatius* i. 481. He distinguishes the title of Cæsar conferred in 136 from a designation ("some sort of adoption . . . some steps . . . some intentions") which may have been made long before. The two were separated in the case of Pius, who was designated Jan. 24, 138 (*V. Hadr.* 26) though the *adrogatio* and Cæsarship date from Feb. 25 (*V. Pii* 4). The interval may have been much greater in the case of Verus, for the need was less urgent in an earlier stage of Hadrian's illness, and Verus was a young and untried man. His designation must be placed in 134 at latest, to leave room for the prætorship before his two consulships of 136, 137. Julius Capitolinus (*V. Veri* 1) puts the birth of the younger Verus, which seems fixed for 130 or 131, *in prætura patris sui.* Tillemont *Empereurs*, ii. 529,

In spite of his soldierly virtues and care for the Roman ceremonies, Hadrian was less Roman than any emperor before him; so it was as well for him that he spent most of his time in the provinces. The executions which cost him his popularity were near the opposite ends of his reign. In 118 came the conspiracy of the four consulars, including Lusius Quietus and Cornelius Palma, the conquerors of Atropatene and Arabia. This time the Senate was loyal, and hurriedly put the conspirators to death while Hadrian was on the Danube. If the conspiracy was real, it marked the discontent of Trajan's generals at the abandonment of Trajan's characteristically Roman policy of conquest. Though Hadrian was very respectful to the Senate—he gave them after the conspiracy the coveted oath to put to death no senator but on the Senate's own sentence—he did not a little to increase the emperor's power at their expense by subjecting Italy like a province to four consular judges, and by organizing a permanent civil service of *equites* on lines which even Constantine did not greatly change. The latent antagonism came out in 134, when Hadrian returned in broken health to die in Italy. His last illness was a reign of terror for the Senate; and only the piety of his successor and the fear of the army saved his memory

proposes *quaestura*: and in any case Verus cannot well have been prætor then, if he was with Hadrian in Egypt.

Perhaps Gregorovius (*Kaiser Hadrian* 164) does best by reminding us that *filium* need not be taken in a legal sense. The position of Verus may have resembled Hadrian's own after his marriage with Sabina, as a practically though not formally or irrevocably designated successor. A further suggestion to read *Sergiano* for *Serviano* throws back the date to 132, and is tempting: against it however is the familiar character of the letter.

The general doubts about the documents in Vopiscus do not seem specially to affect this letter.

from the condemnation meted out to tyrants like Nero and Domitian.

That successor was himself a senator of mature age, and represents a senatorial reaction. Titus Aurelius Antoninus came of a Gaulish family long settled in Italy. Of his grandfathers, T. Aurelius Fulvus was consul twice, and Præfect of the City; Arrius Antoninus was also consul twice, and a famous proconsul of Asia. Under their training (his father died young) Antoninus grew up a blameless model of Roman virtue, passing through the usual official course, till he too reached the proconsulship of Asia, and thence the emperor's inner council. A few years later, when Hadrian was dying, and his designated successor L. Aelius Verus was dead, his second and happier choice fell on Antoninus. In the long line of emperors there are few so amiable as the grave and gentle Antoninus Pius, yet few so free from weakness. He was an old official who knew when severity was needed, and could hold firmly to a carefully formed opinion, yet was always willing to learn—a man of simple habits and simple sense of duty, who cared as little for the pomp of state as for the clamours of the populace. Antoninus was a Roman noble of the best sort, without Hadrian's brilliancy, but also free from Hadrian's vanity. His real regard too for religion and quiet following of ancient custom contrasted well with Hadrian's bitter scepticism. But Antoninus "was no reformer." Instead of looking forward like Hadrian to the real mission of the Empire in the world, he was quite satisfied to keep things nearly as he found them. He came in as a stop-gap, because Annius Verus was not old enough to govern; and he scarcely attempted

to be much more than an administrator. The few changes he made were mostly backward moves, as when he restored to the Senate its jurisdiction over Italy. His reign was peaceful—a second Numa's reign, for he left the Parthian War to his successor—and stagnant, for the Roman world was too well pleased with itself, and too contemptuous of barbarian migrations, to notice the first stirrings of the whirlwind from the north.

As regards the Christians, the reigns of Hadrian and Titus Antoninus (117-161) may be taken together. Things generally followed the lines laid down by Trajan. Rulers are few whose personal character counts for more than the permanent policy of the state and the influence of their surroundings; and even Hadrian was not one of those few—far less Antoninus. The permanent policy of the Empire had been well stated by Trajan; and the Christians could not hope for much from the men who advised his successors. The jurists had no liking for "people who troubled men's minds with new worships";[1] philosophers and rhetoricians like Rusticus and Fronto were bitter enemies; and the great prætorian præfects, Marcius Turbo (119-135) and Gavius Maximus (140-157) were stern soldiers, not likely to deal more gently with them than Lollius Urbicus dealt with Ptolemæus and the rest.[2]

There might seem to be a minor hope in Hadrian's personal character, for he must have had a sort of interest in Christianity as in everything else. On the strength of this Quadratus, and perhaps Aristides,

[1] Paullus *Sent.* v. 21. He writes *cir.* 220, and his phrase would at least include the Christians.

[2] Justin *Apol.* ii. 2.

ventured to present an Apology to him. As to its influence on him, we can only say that he was not the man to take it seriously. However, Justin and Melito praise him for his justice and for checking lawless assaults, while the legends make him a brutal persecutor. A single rescript survives in which Hadrian speaks for himself.

The informers had not been slow to find a use for Christianity. If it was not always a safe charge to make, it had the advantage of exposing even the soundest heathen to serious dangers of lawless violence before the trial, and of slanders that were likely to stick to him after it. So Licinius Silvanus Granianus, proconsul of Asia *cir.* 123, 124, referred the matter to Hadrian, who thought it too important to be dropped when Granianus went out of office. His answer is addressed to Minucius Fundanus, the successor of Granianus. He writes, he says, in order that innocent persons may not be molested, and that informers may not get the chance of levying blackmail. If then provincials wish to appear against Christians and prove some crime against them in open court, they may do so: only they must not try to force a condemnation by mere prayers and outcries. The right course is for an accuser to make his charge, and the magistrate to try it summarily (*cognoscere*). If then any one accuses them and proves some act contrary to law, Fundanus will punish the offenders as they deserve; but he will take particular care that if the charge turns out vexatious (*calumniae gratia*) the accuser shall be severely punished (*suppliciis severioribus*).

This is no edict of toleration. Its purport is not that the Christian has ceased to be a criminal, but

that the heathen must be protected from false charges. As Trajan forbade Pliny to act on anonymous letters, so Hadrian forbids Fundanus to act on the outcries of mobs: and Melito tells us that others of his rescripts were to the same effect.[1] But in protecting the heathen, he gives a good deal of shelter to the Christian. He forces the accuser to come out from the crowd and take his personal responsibility. If he made good his charge, he was a marked man to even the better sort of heathens: if he failed, severe punishment awaited him. Nor could he be sure what he had to prove, for Hadrian leaves the question open. Some governors would interpret him as meaning that it was enough to prove the accused a Christian, while others would punish the accuser if he failed to prove some further breach of law. The risk of this uncertainty must have gone a long way to discourage persecutions: and this no doubt Hadrian intended. The Christians could fairly say that he was so far their friend as to consider them less dangerous than the informers.[2]

Telesphorus of Rome is the only martyr known by name from Hadrian's time; and it is not quite clear whether he belongs to the last months of

[1] *ap.* Eus. iv. 26.

[2] Keim, Baur, v. Schubert (Möller, *K.G.*[2] i. 185-6) count the rescript a forgery, but for no very good reasons. The mistake in the proconsul's name (Serenius for Silvanus) is a trifle; and so is Justin's awkward way of tacking it on to his Apology. The genuineness of the Latin in Rufinus is irrelevant. The silence of Tatian, Athenagoras, and Tertullian is outweighed by the direct reference of Melito (*ap.* Eus. iv. 26). Nor is the policy of the rescript out of character with Hadrian. If even Trajan did not want the Christians hunted out, the cosmopolitan Hadrian may have gone a step further, and discouraged prosecutions. Christianity was a crime, of course; but it was rather a folly than a danger, and more harm than good was done by a pedantical observance of the law.

The rescript is accepted by Lightfoot, Mommsen, and Harnack.

Hadrian or to the first of Antoninus.[1] Yet we must not assume that there were no martyrs because we hear of none. The mobs must have had victims, whatever the emperor might do; and governors who disliked the Christians could still do a good deal to make accusations easy. The rescript was not illogical; but it was a half measure which pleased neither side, and of necessity was gradually forgotten —at least by the officials.

Antoninus was more dangerous than Hadrian to the Christians. His genuine religion and his friendly relation to the Senate both made him hostile to them; the only thing in their favour was the want of initiative which in the main kept him on the lines of his predecessors. Thus we hear of a persecution at Athens, which carried off Publius the bishop and scattered his flock; but we also hear that Antoninus wrote to "Larissa and Thessalonica and Athens and all the Greeks" to forbid riots.[2] Hadrian's system continued, but it must have been worked less favourably to the Christians. Accordingly, we find not only more actual persecution than in Hadrian's time, but more traces of unrecorded persecution. Hermas and Justin are full of memories and forebodings of persecution. The case of Ptolemæus and two others recorded by Justin[3] belongs to the later years of Antoninus, or more precisely *cir.* 152; and it shews how summarily a hostile Præfect like Lollius Urbicus might deal with Christians. A heathen complained that Ptolemæus had taught his wife Christianity.

[1] Irenæus iii. 3 answers for the fact. Eus. iv. 10 puts it in the first year of Antoninus; but the chronology of the Roman bishops rather points to the time of Hadrian's illness. So Lightfoot and Harnack.

[2] Melito *supra.*

[3] Justin *Apol.* ii. 2. Harnack *A.C.L.* i. 274 for the date.

When the case comes on, Ptolemæus is only asked whether he is a Christian, and ordered straight to execution. Urbicus does not waste a word on him. A bystander who remonstrates is asked the same question, and ordered at once to execution: then another is dealt with in the same way. There is no sign of any regular persecution going on; yet here are three death sentences in three minutes. They are not even asked to swear or sacrifice, but summarily condemned on confession of the Name.

But Asia was still the centre of Christendom, and from Asia came the most illustrious victim of the reign of Antoninus.

As the apostles passed away, so did their disciples after them. Fewer and fewer year by year survived of the elders who had seen St. John, and Polycarp of Smyrna must have been nearly the last of them.[1]

[1] Harnack's attempt to throw doubt on this fact (*A.C.L.* i. 657) seems a complete failure.

It is agreed (at least by Harnack)—1, that Irenæus and Florinus were disciples of Polycarp. 2, that Polycarp was a disciple of one John in Asia. 3, that Irenæus believed this John to have been the apostle, and not an elder named John. In this Harnack thinks he was mistaken—that he was quite a small boy when he heard Polycarp, and heard nothing from him but a few sermons.

Well, Irenæus may have been a boy, though ἐν τῇ πρώτῃ ἡλικίᾳ points rather to early manhood; but in any case he must have been a large boy to draw such a picture of Polycarp as he does. He also carefully and expressly tells us that he heard a good deal more than "a few sermons" from Polycarp; and indeed Polycarp's habit of "stopping his ears and running away with his wonted exclamation" is not a natural ending for a sermon. Harnack airily dismisses the whole picture as a play of fancy, forgetting that there was no sense in drawing it, unless Florinus was certain to recognize the likeness.

If human nature is not to count for nothing, Irenæus can hardly be mistaken. Consider what a boy's memory is of a teacher he knows and venerates as Irenæus knows and venerates Polycarp. No memory of my own early life is more indelible than that Dr. Butler and not another was the teacher of my own old master Kennedy. Yet it was not the work of Kennedy's life to deliver faithfully a particular narrative once delivered to him. Many of Polycarp's "stories about the Lord" must have made it plain enough which John was his teacher. Did he never tell them how the Baptist pointed

If he "had served his Lord fourscore years and six" at his death in 155-6, he must have been born in the years of confusion 68-70; and of Christian parents, for if we take account of his recent journey to Rome, his age cannot much have exceeded 86.[1]

Apostles (we do not know who) made him bishop in Smyrna, and Ignatius may have recognized in him the bulwark of the faith in Asia. "Stand like an anvil," he says to him; and it was the very work for such a man. Polycarp is no genius, but a faithful soldier at his post. His only thought is to keep safe the faith delivered to him, and hand it on to a new circle of disciples. One of these was Irenæus; another Florinus, who fell away to Gnosticism.

At only three points of his long life does Polycarp come clear before us. The first of these is in Trajan's time, when he receives his letter from Ignatius, and soon after writes himself to the church at Philippi, to ask in particular for the last news of the martyr, who had passed them on his way to Rome.

After a space of forty years or so Polycarp is himself in Rome. We are not told what brought him

out the Lamb of God? Did he leave out the Crucifixion from his teaching? Had Polycarp no younger friends to tell their stories about him? Had Irenæus no older friends to set him right? Did all the churches go wrong about "the Father of the Christians," as the very heathens called him?

I have discussed this question more fully in the *Contemporary Review* (February 1897). It does not seem much affected by anything published since.

[1] It is a nice question whether his death was in 155 (Waddington, Lightfoot) or 156 (Turner) but the old date 166 is certainly wrong.

The 86 years are probably to be reckoned from his birth. If from his baptism, we may be certain that he must have had Christian parents or guardians, for the rite must have been performed in infancy, or at any rate in the next few years.

there, or whether this was the visit on which he answered Marcion's request to be recognized with, "I recognize—the firstborn of Satan." Polycarp was not the man to see that even Marcion had got hold of some truths the churches were in danger of forgetting. However, he discussed the Easter question with Anicetus of Rome; and if they came to no agreement, they parted friends.

A little later came the end. It is told in the pathetic letter of the church of Smyrna to the church of Philomelium, written shortly after.[1] A persecution was raging, and eleven Christians had been tortured and given to the beasts at Smyrna. The only recreant we read of is Quintus a Phrygian who came forward of himself, but was brought to reason by a view of the beasts. As a Phrygian, he is likely enough to have been a Montanist; but in any case, such conduct was not approved by the church of

[1] The authenticity of the Epistle is established by the evidence of Eusebius, who quotes the chief part of it in *H.E.* iv. 15, by its own truthful ring, and by various coincidences. The objections to it, with one exception, may fairly be pronounced frivolous.

It is no doubt a *Tendenzschrift* which forces the circumstances of Polycarp's passion into a parallel with our Lord's. But this is common in such narratives from the second century onward, and need throw no doubt on its historical character. The very clumsiness of the parallels fairly guarantees the facts. Polycarp's dream of the burning pillow is natural enough in a time of persecution; and it was very naturally hailed as a prophecy when it came true. If again we consider the intense excitement of the scene to the Christians who risked their lives to witness it (and escaped, *ἐτηρήθημεν*) the miraculous element will not seem unlikely. The voice was assumed to be from heaven, for "no man saw the speaker." The fire curved, as it did *e.g.* with Hooper and Savonarola. The sweet smell may have come from the wood, or even been purely imaginary, as in the case of some of the martyrs of Lyons and Vienne (Eus. v. 1) where there was neither wood nor fire. The one serious difficulty is the dove, and this is either a false reading (*e.g.* *περὶ στύρακα*, conj. Wordsworth for *περιστερὰ*) or a very natural gloss, or (Lightfoot) a deliberate forgery of the fourth century.

See Lightfoot, *Ign.* i. 615 *sq.*: and on the sweet smell Harnack, *Z.K.G.* ii. 291.

Smyrna. "We praise not such as give themselves up to the authorities, for not so the Gospel teaches." Presently a cry was raised for Polycarp, who had retired to a farm, seemingly one of his own. "God's will be done," when he was discovered, refusing to escape to another estate. Then he ordered food to be set before his captors while he prayed, and was in due course brought to the amphitheatre, where the populace was waiting for him. The din was awful; but over it rang out the words, "Be strong, Polycarp, and play the man." They must have come from heaven, for no man saw the speaker, though many of us heard the voice. The proconsul bade him swear by Cæsar's Genius, and cry "Away with the atheists." The latter he did, but with his eyes to heaven and his hand waving to the crowd. "Curse Christ." "Fourscore years and six have I served him, and he never did me wrong: how then can I revile my King, my Saviour?" When the herald proclaimed that Polycarp had confessed himself a Christian, the whole multitude cried out against him, This is the Teacher of Asia, the Father of the Christians, the destroyer of our gods, the teacher of many to cease from sacrifice and worship. They shouted to Philip the Asiarch to try a beast on him; but this, he said, was not lawful, because the games were over. So they decided to have Polycarp burned —fulfilling his dream of his pillow on fire, and his prophecy upon it. No sooner said than done. The Jews (as usual) helped them eagerly to collect the fuel, forgetting a great sabbath in their zeal for so good a work. The old man could hardly loose his shoes, for the reverence of the faithful had always done it for him. He was not nailed in the usual way

—only tied. At last he stood ready, and offered up a prayer whose echoes we hear ourselves in our *Gloria in excelsis*. But the flames arched round instead of touching him, and a sweet smell came forth from the pyre. So the miscreants called for the *confector* or beast-finisher to put his knife into him. And there came forth [a dove and] a quantity of blood, which put out the fire, to the astonishment of all the crowd. This was the end of the glorious Polycarp, the apostolic and prophetic teacher of our own time, who was bishop of the catholic church in Smyrna. As the Jews were urgent that the body should not be given up to us, lest forsooth we should leave the Crucified and worship this offender, the centurion burned it in the middle of the amphitheatre. So afterwards we took up the bones, more valuable than precious stones and more refined than gold, and laid them up in a fitting place.

Books.—See V.

CHAPTER IX

MARCUS AURELIUS ANTONINUS

The succession question was always a difficulty in the Empire. The choice was commonly between a civil war and a weak reign, for a man brought up to arbitrary power usually turns out badly. All the worst emperors (till Phocas) came in by way of inheritance. No emperor ever passed over a son old enough to reign; but if he had no son, he might escape from the dilemma by adopting some approved person. Galba tried the plan without success, but the quiet of the second century was largely due to the use of it. Nerva, Trajan, and Hadrian at first, simply designated their own successors by adoption; but when L. Verus died (Jan. 1, 138) Hadrian settled the succession for two generations at once. As M. Annius Verus was only seventeen, and rather weakly, he adopted Antoninus instead, but required him in his turn to adopt not only Annius Verus, but Lucius Verus the son of his former choice, who was only a boy. After Hadrian's death, Antoninus gave his daughter Faustina to Marcus (146) and designated him alone as his successor, treating Verus rather as a reserve in case Marcus should be laid aside by his weak health. It was a dangerous piece of generosity when Marcus took him for his colleague on the death

of Antoninus in 161. Fortunately Verus proved insignificant, and died in 169.

Marcus Aurelius Antoninus—to give him his imperial name—was neither a genius nor a statesman nor a general. He had nothing but a rare kindliness and a lofty sense of duty to bring the Empire through the greatest dangers that had yet assailed it. Sweetness of character is rare among the emperors; we scarcely meet it again except in Severus Alexander and John Comnenus: but in his lofty sense of duty Marcus stands alone among them. Julian is most like him; but Julian was bitter, and his conscience was not so searching. Marcus was no rhetorician, but a philosopher from the age of twelve, and regulated every act and word and thought by the strictest rule of Stoic discipline. No Christian saint could surpass him in severity to his own failings and charity to those of others. Yet there is nothing Christian in his scanty creed. He believes firmly in a Power behind the world: but of what sort is it? He speaks of the gods, and that their concern in human affairs is beyond dispute. He was diligent in attending the public ceremonies, and his sacrifices were a proverb, like Julian's. But he also uses pantheistic and monotheistic language, and seems practically certain only of Fate, and of the wise man's independence. He is quite doubtful even of a future life. Hence his severity is neither the Christian's hatred of sin nor the ascetic's hatred of pleasure, but the Stoic's contempt of outward things as indifferent. Similarly, his charity to others is largely due to the fatalistic belief that fools will be fools, and it is folly to complain. Marcus has no thought of appealing to the fool's better nature; for on Stoic principles the fool is altogether

born in folly, so that there is no better nature to appeal to. So Marcus might be a saint himself, but he never strove like the Christians to turn common men into saints.

Yet his charity was real, and so real that some set it down for his worst fault as a ruler. He could see merit in any one, and gave great offence to Society by choosing the illiterate Bassæus Rufus for his Prætorian Præfect; but he could scarcely believe evil of any one. His noble charity must often have drawn out the better self of men; and even if it was abused, he may not have been more deceived than meaner men. No doubt his heart was in a Stoic's dream-world, but he was not unpractical for this world also, and his patient labour was rewarded by some of the greatest successes in Roman history. There was hard fighting on the Euphrates and the Danube, and a pestilence at home which must have swept away more than half the population of the Empire. Marcus never wavered. The Parthian war began with a legion destroyed at Elegeia, but it ended in conquests which rivalled those of Trajan; the Germans forced their way into Italy and slew a Prætorian Præfect, but no emperor came so near as Marcus to the conquest of Germany. Little as he liked war, that side of his work was thoroughly done. His administration also was laborious and humane. The great jurists under Stoic inspiration had long been endeavouring to soften the worst harshnesses of Roman law; and the work went on the quicker with a Stoic on the throne. Taxation was adjusted, the *patria potestas* was limited, the charities of Nerva and Trajan were extended, the position of women was improved, and some of the worst abuses of slavery

were forbidden. It is true that all this good work was destroyed in the next century; but the mortal sickness of the ancient world was far beyond the skill of Marcus, or indeed of Divus Julius himself. The Empire itself, with all its grandeur, was no more than a palliative which delayed the ruin for five hundred years. It was but of the *καταργούμενοι*.[1] Meanwhile the services of Marcus were real, and they were not unrecognized by his subjects. Society might look askance on his carelessness of class pride, and generals like Avidius Cassius might take for granted that a philosopher must be a weakling: but Augustus himself in his old age was not more loved than Marcus, though like a true Stoic, he cared nothing for popularity. Even the Christians were overawed by his saintly fame. And it was enduring. Courtiers may first have placed his image among their household gods; but it was not courtiers who still kept it there in Constantine's time.

The Christians are the one exception to the all-embracing charity of Marcus. He never mentions them but once, where he says that the wise man will face death deliberately and gravely, "not in sheer obstinacy like the Christians," or with any bravado.[2] It would be rash to conclude from this that he knew very little about them; but we do not find that he had any personal acquaintance with them, and there is no reason to think it would have improved his opinion of them. His teachers the philosophers

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 6—a keen touch of historic insight.

[2] *Med.* xi. 3 *κατὰ ψιλὴν παράταξιν*, which perhaps goes best into American, as "pure cussedness."

He may have met a Christian in his youth. *Med.* i. 17 he thanks the gods, "that I never touched Benedicta." The name sounds Christian, and the context shews that (whether by her own fault or not) she was a temptation to him.

must have been very hostile to them: Fronto certainly believed the worst stories told of them. Marcus probably did not;[1] but in any case he agreed with Pliny and Urbicus, that a firm avowal of Christianity was of itself obstinacy worthy of death. They were rebels to begin with, and that was enough. Marcus had nothing of Hadrian's curiosity, and indeed there was not much in the Gospel that he would have found attractive. Christ was very unlike a philosopher, and the sin and the atonement of which He spoke were meaningless to a Stoic. Faith was base and hope was vain and love was weak, when viewed from the Stoic's pedestal of haughty independence. It was an absurd fanaticism, and the courage it inspired was mere perverseness and bravado. Other emperors might share his Roman feeling, his regard for the state religion, his love of order, his dislike of show: but it was the pride of philosophy that made him one of the most determined enemies of the Christians, and the most conscientious of them all. In some ways he was more dangerous to them than Decius or Diocletian, for they had to be careful how they charged him with injustice. Complaints against a Nero might be readily received, and even Decius or Valerian was no more than a fine sample of Roman virtue: but all men counted Marcus for a saint. Surely such a man would not have persecuted them without good reason.

The persecution went on with increased severity throughout the reign of Marcus. The Christians were more in number, and therefore more conspicuous,

[1] Eus. v. 1 *εἰ δέ τινες ἄρνοιντο τούτους ἀπολυθῆναι* seems to mean what Trajan meant. If they were set free the moment they were cleared of Christianity, they cannot have been supposed guilty of any very atrocious further crimes.

while the calamities of the Empire caused savage outbreaks of panic against such miscreants. The evil was all their work, of course. So henceforth, as Tertullian puts it, If the Tiber rises too high, or the Nile does not rise high enough, or if there be drought or earthquake, or famine, or pestilence, then straightway, The Christians to the beasts.[1] But it was more than a parrot cry of the thoughtless populace. Serious heathens also felt more and more that if the favour of the gods had built up the Empire, the long succession of calamities which assailed it shewed that these impious traitors were bringing down the wrath of heaven on a state which did not set itself in grim earnestness to root them out.

The first conspicuous case is that of Justin and his companions about 165,[2] before the *Praef. Urbi* Junius Rusticus. They had no kindly judge, for Rusticus was a philosopher, and one of the emperor's most respected teachers. Still, Rusticus was not quite so summary as Lollius Urbicus. He asks them a few questions, and tries to frighten them. "Where do you hold your meetings? Do you suppose that you will rise again, and live for ever?" I do not suppose it, because I know it, was the answer. In due course, they were scourged and beheaded as men who "would neither sacrifice to the gods nor obey the emperor's command."

There were victims of higher rank in the church. Polycrates of Ephesus names as martyrs after Polycarp the bishops, Thraseas of Eumenea and Sagaris of Laodicea. It may be that Eumenea already bade fair to become the almost Christian city it was in the third century. But the most remarkable incident

[1] *Apol.* 40.

[2] More accurately, between 163 and 167.

was at Pergamus, where Carpus and Papylus were crucified. When a woman in the crowd, named Agathonice, saw it, she cried out, "That dinner is prepared for me too," tore off her clothes, and laid herself down on a cross to be nailed after them.[1]

Presently came a change for the worse. Marcus was too conscientious—too much of a philosopher and too little of a statesman—to let ungodliness lie quiet like Trajan's. So he issued an edict against "those who caused tumults by introducing new worships"—of whom the Christians were the chief offenders, for Isis and Mithras were by this time pretty well settled in the Empire. The more effectually to hunt them down, informers were invited, and received their reward in confiscated goods. Thus the philosopher does the very thing which Trajan had denounced as altogether bad, "and unworthy of my times."

The story of the Thundering Legion (*legio fulminea*) is not easily dated, but perhaps it may come in *cir.* 174. The tale is that Marcus in his German wars was once surrounded by enemies and perishing of thirst, when the prayers of the Christian soldiers brought down a storm of rain and lightning which relieved the Romans, and dismayed the enemy. Now the storm is a fact. Marcus pictures it on his column, as sent down by Jupiter Pluvius. And the prayers of the Christian soldiers may be taken for another fact. The *legio fulminata*[2] was recruited in the district of Melitene, where the Christians were

[1] *Mart. Carpi Papyli*, etc. The narrative has every mark of authenticity.

[2] *Fulminata*, not *fulminea*—thunderstruck, not thundering: and it had borne the name since the time of Augustus. Troops were much more often moved on temporary service from the Danube to the Euphrates than the other way: but after 167 the Danube region was disturbed, while the Euphrates was quiet.

strong, and may just then have been serving on the Danube: but at all events, there must have been Christians in the army, and no doubt they made their prayers. It was very natural that the Christians should put the two facts together, and claim the storm as an answer of their own God to their own prayers. Marcus, as we have seen, had another theory of the miracle; and the heathen populace had yet a third, for they ascribed it to the emperor's own prayers. But the matter seemed so plain to the Christians that they could not imagine a saint like Marcus unconvinced. Whatever officials might do, the good emperor (they thought) must himself have relented. They actually forged for him a report of the miracle, to the Senate which gave the Christian version of it, and seems to have deceived Tertullian. It did not free them from punishment, but it effectually protected them by laying a very severe penalty on accusers.[1]

So the Christians dreamed a dream of that which ought to have been, and therefore must have been. The reality was the storm which burst on the churches of Lyons and Vienne in 177.

Marseille was an old Greek colony from Phocæa in Asia, and its commerce had long spread up the Rhone Valley and over Gaul and across to Britain. With commerce came Christianity, as usual; and by this time there were churches at Lyons and Vienne, and perhaps further up the country, and scattered Christians in very remote parts. The churches were Greek, and kept up an active intercourse with Asia. Thence came some of their chief men, like Alexander the physician, and Alcibiades the vegetarian, who

[1] Tert. *Apol.* 5.

were Phrygians. Attalus was of Pergamus, the old home of Cæsar-worship, the presbyter Irenæus came from Smyrna, and the letter in which they tell their story is addressed "to the brethren in Asia and Phrygia." From Asia too came Gnostics and Montanists; and Judaizers like Blastus were not wanting. Valentinianism was rife in Gaul, and Marcus the charlatan and his disciples seduced women wholesale. Still the churches were sound in the main, as they were soon abundantly to shew.

The Christians were mobbed and plundered for some time before the city magistrates took action by arresting a number of them. On their avowal of Christianity, they were thrown into prison to await the governor's arrival. It was not simply a question of religion, for the old slanders were rife in Lyons just then, and were backed up with some evidence extracted from slaves. So the preliminary tortures went far beyond the usual cruelty of Roman law; and even those who renounced Christianity were not set free as in Trajan's time, but tortured again on the further charge of abominable crimes. Vettius Epagathus was a man of rank; but when he offered to be their advocate in open court, he too was shouted down. Upon his bold avowal of Christianity "he was straightway added to the number of the martyrs."[1] The mob was furious, especially against the ring-

[1] The fate of Vettius is indicated by the phrase "was and is a genuine disciple of Christ, following the lamb whithersoever he goeth." Renan understands, "Was and is still among us." But the probability is all the other way, for (a) the example of Urbicus was only too likely to be followed in a time of panic, as it was in Alexander's case a little later (b) the reference to Apoc. xiv. 4 points to martyrdom, though the word μαρτύρων is not of itself conclusive (c) the parallel of Biblias, who revoked her recantation, "and was added to the number of the martyrs" would seem decisive. Vettius is not mentioned again; but he may have died in prison.

leaders, Sanctus a deacon of Vienne, Maturus a recent convert, Attalus of Pergamus, and the slave-girl Blandina. Sanctus underwent every torment which could be devised for him; but when his inflamed wounds were reopened a few days later, the second torture proved rather cure than further punishment. Blandina was an insignificant creature—only a slave—and they were all in fear that she would yield: but she tired out the relays of men who tortured her from early morning till night: at last they confessed that they could think of nothing more that they could do to her. Her whole body was so broken and torn open that they only wondered she was not dead long ago. They got nothing from her but, I am a Christian, and there is nothing evil done among us. Even Biblias, "whom the devil thought he had already swallowed up," because she had denied Christ before, seemed in her second torture to wake up as out of a deep sleep—"How can we devour children, who are not allowed even to eat the blood of animals?"[1]—and thenceforth she took her place again with the rest. After the tortures they were thrown into a dark and stifling prison, where they often lay with their legs forced wide apart in the stocks for days together, and exposed to all the cruelty of savage jailers.

Among the prisoners was the bishop Pothinus, a disciple of apostles, and now a man of ninety, and nearly worn out with age and sickness when he was brought into court. There he made the good confession. Who is the god of the Christians? If you are worthy, you shall know. On his way back the whole multitude set upon him with cuffs and kicks,

[1] An interesting survival of the apostolic letter (Acts xv.).

and every missile that came to hand, for that was the right way to avenge their gods. He survived two days. Many others died in prison, but those who had been tortured held out wonderfully. They had a good deal of leisure; and the management of Roman prisons was what in our time would be considered scandalously lax. If the jailers had small regard for humanity, they were all the more open to more solid arguments. One way or the other, the confessors got every relief or comfort which the care of the church and the brethren could obtain for them. They wrote letters,[1] and received sometimes quite a number of visitors. They conversed freely, and practised the forbidden worship without concealment. Nobody ran any risk, for the authorities were quite satisfied if the prisoners were forthcoming when wanted. In the company at Lyons there was little fanaticism and still less quarrelling, but much sober charity and earnest devotion. When Alcibiades tried to keep up his vegetarian diet in prison, "it was revealed to Attalus that Alcibiades was not doing well in refusing to use the creatures of God and causing a scandal." After that he ate meat and gave thanks. Alcibiades was also a prophet of the Montanists; and this was enough to raise the whole question of Montanism. So the confessors wrote sundry letters to the churches of Asia and Phrygia, and one to Eleutherus bishop of Rome "on behalf of peace," which they sent by the hand of Irenæus. A later letter of the Gaulish brethren founded on these is described by Eusebius as "most orthodox," so that the confessors must have leaned against Montanism.

[1] It has been seriously argued by one of the literary critics that the Epistles of Ignatius must be spurious, because a condemned criminal would not have been allowed to write letters.

But their chief concern was with their fallen brethren still in prison with them, most of whom they were able to bring back to the faith. Their devotion was of necessity high-strung, but there was neither pride nor harshness in it. Even after many sufferings, they sharply refused the name of martyrs, because that honour belonged only to Christ and to them that had gone before. "They made excuse for all and condemned none, freed all and bound none, and prayed like Stephen for them that evil entreated them."

Some grim devilries awaited them. Special games were given; but there were no gladiators this time—only the Christians. Maturus and Sanctus went through the whole round of tortures as if they had suffered nothing before, in the gauntlet, the beasts and the burning chair. Blandina was crucified—hung on a stake all day for the beasts to tear her down; but as they would not touch her, she was taken back to prison. The populace cried out for Attalus, and he was brought into the arena; but at the last moment the governor heard that he was a Roman citizen, and referred the whole case to the emperor.

In due course Marcus gave his answer. Roman citizens to be beheaded, renegades to be set free, the rest to be given to the beasts. They were now nearing the great festival of the first of August, when the threescore states and five of Gaul came year by year to the sanctuary at the meeting of the Rhone and the Saone, to pay their worship to Rome and Augustus, and to render thanks to heaven for the blessings of the Roman peace. It was a magnificent assembly from all quarters that gathered

round the high priest of Gaul and a worthy show was provided for their entertainment in the amphitheatre below the height of Fourvières. The prisoners were brought up for sentence before the vast assembly. Roman citizens were beheaded at once, and the renegades were questioned separately. This time they all stood firm except a few "sons of perdition," who had always been a scandal to the church. But one of the bystanders, a physician named Alexander, a Phrygian long resident in Gaul, gave them such open encouragement that he was challenged by the people, and on his confession of Christianity summarily condemned to the beasts like the rest. Next morning they began with Attalus and Alexander (for Attalus seems not to have been a Roman citizen after all) and put them through the whole round of tortures till the final butchery. Alexander made no sound; but when Attalus was roasted in the burning chair he said in Latin, Lo, this that you are doing is eating men; but we neither eat men nor do any other wickedness. The others were similarly exhibited, a few every day, as the best part of the entertainment, till none were left but Blandina and a boy named Ponticus. They had been brought in day by day to see the sight; and now the crowd was furious at their constancy, and subjected them without mercy to the whole series of tortures. Ponticus endured them all unshaken, and then Blandina remained alone, rejoicing to go home as though it were a wedding feast. She was first scourged, most likely with the full severity of a Roman scourging over a pillar, then torn and dragged about by the beasts, then roasted in the iron chair, then put in a net and tossed by a bull to the satisfaction of the crowd, and

finally butchered by the beast-finisher. Even that brutal populace, which had been watching bloodshed for days together with frantic joy, could not refuse its admiration. "Never woman in our time suffered so much as this one."

The abomination was not yet quite finished. With all her cruelty, Rome held inviolate the solemn peace of death. The grave was sacred, and the bodies even of the crucified were seldom refused for burial to their friends. But this time they made war upon the dead. Those who died in prison were cast out to the dogs, and guarded that none might bury them; and now the torn and charred remains were watched for days by soldiers. Bribes were useless, prayers availed nothing, and no dark night enabled the Christians to steal the precious relics. After six days of exposure, they were collected and burned, and the ashes were swept into the Rhone. "Where is now their god, and what have they gained by the worship they preferred to life itself? They trusted in a resurrection when they faced death so boldly: now we have made sure that they shall never have a resurrection."

It is not good to dwell too long on scenes like these, for there is a sensuous, a voluptuous joy well known to the ascetics in suffering and tales of suffering. But the scenes at Lyons are a fair sample of what was continually done in other persecutions; and it is right and needful to face their horrors once for all, that we may not forget the things which charity and decency compel us to leave unsaid elsewhere. It is good to see the full splendour of Christian courage in its best and purest form, as clear of pride and fanaticism as anywhere in history: and

it is good to see the very worst of heathenism in the hideous games of the amphitheatre. Yet after all, it might have been worse. Atrocious as the persecution was, and full of cruelty and malice, it has no trace of treachery or wilful falsehood. In its own way, it is quite straightforward. The panic was real, and the governor who condemned the Christians to the beasts or the fire would have scorned to entrap them with deceitful promises. It is not in pagan Rome that we find the lowest deeps of human wickedness.

Marcus died at Carnuntum, March 17, 180, worn out with the fatigues of the war he had so nearly completed. We cannot greatly blame him for refusing to disinherit his unworthy son. Commodus was at any rate sure of the succession without a civil war; and even if he had shewn signs of an evil disposition, he was still too young to be finally condemned. Perhaps Marcus did the right thing, even if it turned out badly. But the noblest of the ancients died in sadness. If he had brought the Empire safely through its trials, he had utterly failed to check its decay. He had done his duty "as a Roman and a man"; and here was the end of all.

Books

See V; also *Renan *Marc-Aurèle* (perverse but brilliant); Neumann *Römische Staat* Leipz. 1891 (only Vol. I. publ.).

CHAPTER X

Commodus

Commodus, says Dio,[1] was not naturally evil-disposed —quite the reverse—but simplicity and still more timidity put him at the mercy of those about him. Inexperience first led him astray, and in course of time he became thoroughly wanton and cruel. In vulgarity, in neglect of duty and in general enervation of character, he reminds us of Nero; but Commodus was the more brutal of the two. His taste was more for gladiators and comedians than for jockeys and singers. Hercules was his model, not Apollo; and many were the beasts he slew with his own hand in the amphitheatre like any vulgar gladiator. The laborious campaigns of Marcus had brought the Germans lower than they had ever been since the defeat of Varus; and his generals urged Commodus to complete what seemed an easy conquest. It was dangerous, said Pompeianus,[2] as well as unseemly, to leave his father's work unfinished. Commodus cared little for that. In the course of the summer he patched up a peace, and hurried back to enjoy the pleasures of Rome. For a time the old counsellors of Marcus kept him fairly straight; and

[1] Dio *Epit.* 72. 1. This, from a hostile and ungenial writer, is enough to shew that we need caution in dealing with the scandals told by Lampridius.

[2] Herodian i. 6 puts the words in his mouth.

his own first præfect Perennis (180-185) was a soldier and a capable man, though he offended society by turning senators out of commands to make room for mere knights. The worthless young emperor was already reopening the strife between the senate and the army. The crisis of his reign was in a conspiracy (183) of his equally worthless sister Lucilla, the wife of Pompeianus. Commodus had a narrow escape of assassination; and henceforth hatred of the senate became part of his nature. He sacrificed Perennis to the officers of Britain in 185, and his next favourite, the freedman Cleander, to the populace of Rome in 189. By this time things were in a whirl. Cleander's camarilla sold anything and killed any one for money. Præfects and consuls were made and unmade at a bewildering rate, while Commodus was wholly given up to beast-fights and debaucheries, varied with capricious cruelties and un-Roman superstitions. The hatred of the senate was thinly veiled by the basest flattery, while the reckless pampering which kept the prætorian guards to their duty undermined their discipline and exhausted the treasury. Assassination was plainly not far off. Meanwhile the great machine of government went on almost of itself, and shewed few signs of injury. Only Rome was in confusion. The frontiers were guarded, the mutinies put down, the provinces not misgoverned. The great generals honourably upheld the Empire for the present: but what were they likely to do when the inevitable assassination made it the prize of civil war? Here again the position reminds us of Nero's time.

Thus the death of Marcus made no great change for some time. The persecution of the Christians, in particular, went on as before. We have already seen

what Arrius Antoninus was doing in Asia; and the cruelties of Claudius Lucius Herminianus in Cappadocia may belong to this time.[1] Now however, in the first months of Commodus, a new view opens on us, for Christianity in Africa first comes into the light of history. As we have no information how or when it got there, we need for the moment only to notice that it was already well established, and often bore a strong mark of Montanist enthusiasm.

Our first trace of it is July 17, 180, when six Christians from Scili were brought up for trial at Carthage.[2] The proconsul Vigellius Saturninus did the best he could for the accused. He had not sought them out, and would gladly have let them go. Only they must swear by the emperor's genius, and make their prayers for him to the gods. This was the least which the law required. But Speratus took a high tone for them. "We ask no favour. We are not criminals. I allow not this world's rule, but pay my taxes because God is a king of kings." The proconsul would not let him preach, but offered them time for consideration. "We do not want it, in so plain a case." "What have you got in your chest?" "Books, and letters of Paul, a just man."[3] "Take a

[1] Tert. *ad Scap.* 3. The name may be corrupt. He stands between Vigellius Saturninus (180) and Cæcilius Capella, who held Byzantium after Niger's death till 196. If this be the order of time, he is best placed early in the reign of Commodus.

[2] The Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs are found (a) in a later Latin text (b) in a later Greek text (c) in the original Latin text published by Prof. (now Dean) Robinson in 1891 (*Texts and Studies* I. ii. 112).

This text will therefore be our earliest piece of Christian Latin.

The date is corrupt in all the texts: but the consulship must be that of Præsens II. and Condianus, which is 180.

[3] The question may have been meant as a hint that a worse thing might befall them, if the books were of magic. The answer can hardly mean that the Epistles were not yet placed on a level with the Gospels. We are in the time of Irenæus, a full generation after Marcion. The idea is an anachronism.

thirty days' remand, and bethink yourselves." "No, we are all Christians." Saturninus had no choice left. He made no attempt to shake them by torture, but condemned them straight to the sword: upon which they all give thanks to God.

As Saturninus "was the first who turned the sword against us here"[1] in Carthage, we may set down the Scillitans as the first African martyrs. They are fair samples also of African Christianity in its intensity and enthusiasm. We do not know that they rushed to meet their fate: at all events they accept it with defiant pride, and shew no sort of willingness to help the proconsul in his efforts to save them. We know less of Namphamo, the first martyr of Madaura, who was condemned a few months later by the legate of Numidia, and of others whose names only have come down to us. Our heathen informant speaks of endless names hateful to gods and men, of miscreants who added crime to crime by the false pretence of a glorious death. They got their deserts: and these be the gods of the Christians.[2]

Rome could shew a more distinguished victim than these obscure Africans. The Gospel had long since gained a footing in the highest circles, among the Flavii, the Pomponii, the Bruttii, and perhaps the Acilii Glabriones; and of late whole households had gone over to Christianity.[3] Even the empress Bruttia Crispina may well have counted Christian relatives. Early in the reign of Commodus an informer (at the instigation of the devil) accused the senator

[1] Tert. *ad Scap.* 3.

[2] Maximus of Madaura, *ap.* Augustine *Ep.* 16—a little too much in the tone of Harding the Jesuit's "Your stinking martyrs."

[3] Eus. v. 21: perhaps exaggerated.

Apollonius, and was promptly put to death—his legs were broken. But the charge was not thereby disposed of. Apollonius was not a vulgar criminal to be tried summarily like Justin by the City Præfect. The senate was jealous of its own dignity, however little it might wish to shelter Christians. So the *Praefectus Praetorio* Perennis took the case instead of the emperor, who had no mind for serious business, and began by requesting Apollonius to give account of himself in the presence of the senate; no doubt in order to obtain their sanction for extreme measures, if such should be required against one of their own order. The second hearing was in the Præfect's own court; and as Apollonius repeated his refusal to sacrifice, Perennis condemned him straight to the sword.[1]

[1] Our authorities for the case of Apollonius are (a) Eus. v. 21, who refers us for a fuller account to his *Collection of Martyrdoms*. Eus. rests on the *Acta*, which we have in two forms. (b) The Armenian *Acta*, publ. by the Mechitarists of Venice, 1874 (transl. Conybeare, 1893, and later edition 1906, Burchardi, 1893). These begin abruptly. (c) The Greek *Acta* (publ. in *Analecta Bollandiana* xiv. in 1895). These give the best text of the original *Acta*: but the editor makes gross blunders. Thus Perennis is turned into a proconsul of Asia, and finally orders the legs of Apollonius (not of the informer) to be broken.

The accuser's punishment is likely enough, if he was a slave (so Jerome inferred) perhaps of Apollonius himself. In fact, Eus. seems to have turned a servant of Ap. into a servant of the devil; and made his offence consist in accusing a Christian, instead of accusing his master. He is misled by the belief of the apologists that Hadrian at any rate forbade the accusations of Christianity. The other difficulties of the story seem fairly met by the view I have given. It must be remembered that the Senate strove earnestly even to the time of Theodahad (535) to keep in its own hands the power of life and death over its own members. Nerva and Trajan at their accession, and Hadrian after the conspiracy of the four consulars, swore to put no senator to death. It is not clear whether Pius and Marcus followed their example; but as a matter of fact they did put none to death. Thus we see reason for the procedure of Perennis.

The latest work on Apollonius is Klette, *Acta S. Apollonii* (*Texte u. Untersuchungen*) 1897.

As regards other possibly Christian senators, the Acilius Glabrio of that generation may have been as sound a heathen as Claudius Pompeianus

Apollonius was a man of mark; but there was no lack of humbler confessors. Even in bishop Soter's time, before the persecution reached its hottest, we get a glimpse of Christians in the mines, who got some relief from the wide-reaching charity of the Roman church.[1] It was a severe punishment—penal servitude for life, ranking next to death; and only the lower classes were exposed to it, and to the hardships which went with it.[2] Quite late in the reign of Commodus, long after the persecution had spent itself, we still find a number of Christians in the unhealthy lead mines of Sardinia. Some time after 189, "the emperor's devout concubine Marcia" was minded to do the Christians a service. So she asked bishop Victor for their names, obtained their pardon from Commodus, and set them free. With them escaped by fraud the future pope Callistus, for he was not on Victor's list. He was no confessor—only a brawler in a Jewish synagogue. So says Hippolytus.

Marcia was the daughter of a freedman, a man of substance at Anagnia. She was brought up by the Roman presbyter Hyacinthus, and became the concubine of Ummidius Quadratus. Presently Quadratus was involved in Lucilla's plot and put to death, and his household incorporated in the emperor's. When Commodus had got rid of his wife Crispina, Marcia became his concubine, and

himself. Yet if he was a Christian, as others of his family may have been, we get another reason why he recovered his sight and hearing as by magic the moment Commodus was dead (Dio *Epit.* 73. 3).

[1] Eus. *H.E.* iv. 24.

[2] Cyprian, *Ep.* 76 (to the bishops condemned under Valerian) fustibus caesi prius graviter . . . imposuerunt quoque conpedes pedibus vestris et membra infamibus vinculis ligaverunt . . . pedes conpedibus et traversariis cunctabundi . . . humi jacent fessa laboribus viscera . . . squalent sine balneis membra situ et sorde deformia . . . panis illic exiguus . . . vestis algentibus deest . . . semitonsi capitis capillus horrescit.

very nearly reached the dignity of a regular empress. It was a strange position for a "devout woman," to be the morganatic wife of Commodus, who loved to shew her to the soldiers in Amazonian dress. We cannot count her as a Christian, though she was a friend of the Christians, and under her influence the persecution died away. We hear little of its ending. It was still raging when Theophilus of Antioch wrote,[1] but no martyrs can be traced beyond 185. Commodus had neither policy nor philosophy to urge him on; and his devotion to Eastern superstitions must have checked the provincial governors. So we may set down his last seven years as a time of peace.

Meanwhile Commodus went on from bad to worse —even his countenance shews it—and at last his murderous freaks had to be stopped. When he turned on Marcia, she turned on him, and proved the more skilful conspirator. At daybreak Jan. 1, 193 it was announced in Rome that the last of the Antonines was dead, and that Helvius Pertinax reigned in his stead. The senate was wild with joy, and only the guards and the populace regretted him. But we are in more prosaic times than those of Nero. We hear no rumours that Commodus would some day return, though after many days the image on his coins did return, with the superscription of Karl the Great.

Here we may sum up what is known of the spread of Christianity about the end of the second century. It falls into three main divisions, speaking Syriac, Greek, and Latin. Syrian Christianity had now passed from Antioch and the coast-line across the Euphrates to Edessa. The correspondence of Abgar Uchomo (or Uchama) with Christ himself is legendary;

[1] Theoph. *Apol.* iii. 30.

but we hear of a bishop there in 190, and a council on the Easter question about 197. Abgar bar Manu (179-216) seems to have been the first Christian king, and to have issued coins with the sign of the cross. Christianity ceased to be the state religion when Caracalla annexed Edessa to the Empire: but the city remained a stronghold of the Christians. Tatian preached beyond the Tigris, and Syrian merchants found their way into very distant countries. In the next generation we hear of Christians in Bactria, which is far on the way to India, though Bardaisan's mission in Armenia seems to have been a failure. Syrian Christianity was much influenced by Gnosticism, and heterodox writings were read, like the Diatessaron of Tatian and the hymns of Bardaisan. The copies of Tatian—some two hundred in number—in the diocese of Cyrrhus were only put out of use by Theodoret about 453.

Turning now to the Greek world, which gave the tone to all the rest, Greece proper is represented by churches at Corinth, Athens and Lacedæmon, Christians at Larissa, and sundry churches in Crete. The Macedonian churches were still flourishing. In Thrace we find Christians at Byzantium in 196, and a bishop at Debeltus on the Black Sea coast, but no trace of Christians in any part of the basin of the Danube, though there must have been some in the camps of the legions. We see bishops all over Asia within Mount Taurus, and Ephesus rather than Rome is still the central church of Christendom. Zoticus of Comana takes part in the Montanist controversy. Palmas is bishop of Amastris in 173, and holds a synod of Pontic bishops in 197. Alexandria was of course a great church; and its influence was felt

among the Copts as far as the Thebaid, and perhaps even in the "India" to which Pantænus went. Yet Christianity so far was rather Greek than native in Egypt, whereas in Syria beyond the Euphrates it was rather native than Greek. There were also Christians in Cyrene, and in the Roman province of Arabia.

In the West, we begin with Rome, where Greek was still the language of the Latin church. There must have been other churches in Italy, though we hear of none, and there is no trace of Christianity in Noricum. In Africa however Christians were very numerous, and chiefly Latin, though some spoke Phœnician or Berber. Agrippinus of Carthage (*cir.* 213) could hold a council of seventy bishops from the three provinces of Africa, Numidia, and Mauritania. On the other hand, the churches of the Rhone Valley were rather Greek,[1] and looked as much to Asia as to Rome. Of Christianity in Spain, Atlantic Gaul, and Britain we have no definite accounts. Spain however was in too close relation to Rome to be wanting in Christians. Irenæus speaks of Christians among the Celts and Germans (? inside the Rhine) and also of barbarians who hold the faith in their hearts unwritten. Tertullian also says that "parts of Britain inaccessible to the Romans are subject to Christ." This can hardly mean organized churches, but Christian traders must have reached Ireland and Caledonia before Tertullian's time.[2]

[1] Robinson *Texts and Studies* I. ii. 97 *n.* sees traces of a Latin version of N.T. at Lyons in 177.

[2] On the whole subject, Harnack *Ausbreitung* 411-413.

Books

See Chs. V. XVIII. XXI. XXII. also: Conybeare *Apology and Acts* of Apollonius.

CHAPTER XI

THE APOLOGISTS

"LET no man come to us who is learned or wise or prudent; but whoso is stupid or ignorant or babyish, he may come with confidence. The only converts we care to have (or indeed can get) are the silly, the ignoble, and the senseless, the slaves, the women, and the children"—in a word, the contemptible of every sort.

This is the summons of the Christians to the world, as given by Celsus;[1] and if we allow for a little scornful blundering, it is not untruly given. It is but a heathen echo of the Saviour's thanks that the Father "had hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them to babes,"[2] and of St. Paul's avowal that "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble"[3] had yet been chosen. It is the glory of the Gospel that it overlooks all differences of birth and wealth and learning in its direct appeal to the image of God in fallen man. He that came to save the world was bound to gather in its outcasts; and he would only have convicted himself of falsehood if he had brought no call of love divine to the weary and heavy-laden, the oppressed and despised of every sort.

Celsus is right so far; but he goes wrong when he

[1] *ap.* Origen *c. Celsum* iii. 44. [2] Lu. x. 21. [3] 1 Cor. i. 26.

catches up (perhaps from the Epistle of Barnabas) the idea that the Lord chose bad characters for his apostles, and says that the Christians counted rank and learning evil, and required a blind obedience. "Do not examine; only believe," is the maxim he ascribes to them. The churches had not yet come down to preaching that poverty is in itself meritorious, or that ignorance is the mother of devotion. It was natural that the Christians should belong chiefly to the lower classes of society; but if the exceptions were "not many," some of them (as Origen reminds us) were eminent like St. Paul himself, "whom somehow Celsus has forgotten to mention." Even in the New Testament we find men of rank like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathæa and Manaen, the proconsul Sergius Paulus and Dionysius the Areopagite. Within thirty years of the Saviour's resurrection his name was made known to the highest society of Rome by Pomponia Græcina; before the end of the first century it was confessed by the second man in the Empire, Flavius Clemens; and after this we have reason to believe that Christian senators were never wanting.

Had the Gospel been only a philosophy for the learned or an enthusiasm for the devout, it might have gone its way without regard to the questions of the time. But no such isolation is possible for the historic revelation which claims to light up the mysteries of life and satisfy every lofty aspiration which has ever stirred the hearts of men. There was no such opposition of Christianity to reason and learning as Celsus imagined. The Christians, as we shall see, had much the same education as their neighbours; and the chief difference was in their

favour, for the value they attached to their sacred books made it difficult for any earnest Christian to be without a touch of culture. Christian life has never reached a high level without a widespread knowledge of the Bible. And if their writings lacked the polish of the drawing-room, they were also free from its vitiated taste. It is a sorry affectation to despise the New Testament and admire an Apuleius. There is already a breath of new life in the pathetic earnestness of Clement and the simplicity of Justin; and the literary hope of the future was surely with men who were not writing to win the applause of the fashionable cliques, but because they had a message to deliver.

The Apologists naturally fall into two classes according to language. Taking the Greeks first, we find Quadratus and Aristides placed by Eusebius in the reign of Hadrian (117-138) though the latter seems to belong to the time of Pius. Justin Martyr seems at last securely dated shortly after 150, and the nameless writer to Diognetus may be of the same date or a little earlier, though some place it in the third century, and a few count it a forgery of the fifteenth. In the next generation come Tatian, Athenagoras, and Theophilus of Antioch, while Clement of Alexandria belongs to the end of the second century, and the great work of Origen against Celsus brings us nearly to the middle of the third.

The Latin Apologists from Tertullian to Augustine form a striking series. They are all Africans, all rhetoricians or lawyers, all converts at a mature age. Tertullian's *Apology* dates from 197, in the reign of Severus, and his *de Corona militis* and *ad Scapulam*

appear to be as late as that of Caracalla (211-217). The elegant *Octavius* of Minucius Felix is much disputed: but it is best placed in the quieter times of Severus Alexander (222-235). Passing over Cyprian, who is not great as an Apologist, we stop with Arnobius and Lactantius, who lived under the persecution of Diocletian (303-313). The defence of Christianity took another form after its decisive victory, so that even Eusebius is perhaps best left to the historian of the Nicene age.

The Apologists may be grouped again by their views of heathenism. As educated men, as converts (Origen excepted) and as professed defenders of the Gospel, they were bound to give a clear account of their relation to heathen thought. As regards idolatry, there was not much difference among them. They were agreed (as against St. Paul[1]) that the gods were not empty names, but in one way or another corresponded each to each with real powers of hell. In whatever way idolatry arose, evil spirits inspired it, and fashioned it with more or less success into a diabolical caricature of the truth, as for instance the Communion of the Mithraists. Yet however false and brutish the error might be, there still remained the question whether it was falsehood pure and simple; and even if it were, there might still be more or less of truth in philosophy. Justin and Clement had been philosophers in the days of their ignorance, and they did not cease to be philosophers when they became Christians. Justin did not even throw off the philosopher's cloak. So they treat heathenism with a certain respect. They are willing to trace God's teaching even in the errors

[1] 1 Cor. viii. 4.

of the nations, and anxious to gather up every fragment of truth revealed through philosophy to them of old. On the other side, Tertullian delivers his testimony with Puritan decision. Heathenism is from the devils, devilish; and the philosophers are only a little more devil-possessed than their dupes. We who have renounced Satan have escaped his tyranny; but if we tamper with the accursed thing, we shall fall into his hands again. If he finds us on his own ground—at the games for example—he has a right to seize us. So Tertullian (and Arnobius, Tatian and Theophilus are more or less like him) keeps no terms with heathenism, but denounces and ridicules idolatry and philosophy alike. The abominations of the one are hardly more offensive to him than the presumption of the other. If the Gospel is true, they were inclined to think there could be no truth elsewhere.

There can be no doubt which is the deeper and truer of these views. It was rightly felt indeed by every serious thinker that the power and persistency of "the lie" of idolatry could only be accounted for by a delusion so senseless and so ruinous that it might well be called Satanic. But was it therefore all delusion? Here Clement and Tertullian part company. Tertullian is a philosopher in spite of himself, and often an acute philosopher; but he has no philosophy of history. He can indeed look forward with fierce exultation to the glorious games of the day of judgment, when we shall see (and that full soon) gods and deified emperors, philosophers and poets, actors and jockeys, all burning together in the fires of hell at Christ's triumphant coming. These are our games: where is the prætor that can

shew us their like?[1] But as for a meaning in the history of heathenism, it never seems to cross his mind that—"So God loved the world." He leaves it for others to see that if the Incarnation is true at all, its divine purpose must cover the entire history of mankind. The idea of universal history was beyond the reach of men who were encumbered with polytheism and blinded by pride of race and class and learning: but from the Incarnation it follows at once, and to this day there is no nobler outline of it than in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. The Gnostics caught something of the universal meaning of the Incarnation, and Melito of Sardis notes the parallel rise of the Empire and the Church;[2] but Justin and the Alexandrians were the first to work out a regular theory of universal history as the education of the human race. Lessing's great thought is already in the Bible.

But they worked it out in characteristically different ways. Justin represents the older and more conservative university of Athens, and endeavours to stand in the old paths. To the mediating Word of the Targums and St. John he joins the Reason-Word of Philo, transferred from the mists of Platonic idealism to the ground of history. The Word which was made flesh in order to save the world was also the Word which taught the world in former ages. The Word which spoke to the Jews in the Law spoke also to the Gentiles by philosophy. Many a philosopher like Socrates or Heraclitus was a true Christian before Christ, and a witness for God against idolatry;[3] and now Christianity is itself philosophy divine and perfect. Clement is bolder still. He represents the

[1] Tert. *de Spect.* 30. [2] *ap.* Eus. iv. 26. [3] Justin *Apol.* i. 46.

newer university of Alexandria, which was more open than Athens to barbarian influences. His view embraces idolatry and philosophy at once as parts of the training of the nations. God gave them star-worship as a step to something better, and they debased it with the worship of dead men and abominations. Yet however man may sin, however blindly he may grope in darkness, God is seeking after him, and will one day bring him home through all his maze of error.

But whether the Apologists write in Greek or Latin, and whether they like philosophy or not, they are all disciples of Greek culture, and in the main defenders of it. The one exception is Tatian the Assyrian—the barbarian, as he is proud to count himself. The pride and class-feeling of the Greeks blinded him to the value of their work. Yet the mere fact that he looked at things from another point of view enabled him to see some things more clearly than other Apologists. Thus the variety of laws and customs strikes him as absurd: there ought to be one ruler and one law for the world. Thus he is the first herald—even before Melito—of the Holy Roman Empire. Again, his belief in Christian equality enabled him to insist more strongly than others on the education of women. These merits are not very much to set against his general narrowness, but still they are something.

Yet again, the Apologists may be grouped in a third way, according as their writings reflect the acute persecution of the second century, or the quieter times of the Syrian emperors. The earlier Apologies are occasional writings called forth by the stress of actual persecution, addressed to the rulers,

and chiefly intent on refuting scandalous charges, and proving the right of the Christians to toleration. The later are literary works written in times of comparative peace, and under the feeling that Christianity has got beyond the mere needs of self-defence. They can make a wider appeal now to the reason and conscience of the heathens, by setting forth the good tidings of the Gospel and exposing the absurdities and immoralities of polytheism. To the first class belong the earlier Greek writers. Theophilus from one point of view, Tertullian from another, form a transition to the second, which is represented by Clement, Minucius Felix, and Origen. Arnobius and Lactantius belong mainly to this class, but as especially Arnobius has some characters of the first, they will form a distinct section of it.

Before we come to the defence of Christianity by the Apologists, it will be useful to see how the attack was conducted by educated and thoughtful heathens. The *Octavius* of Minucius Felix is a story founded on fact, and the speech ascribed in it to Cæcilius appears to sum up an oration of Fronto of Cirta, the teacher of the emperor Marcus.

Minucius and his two friends are walking on the sands at Ostia, one morning in the summer vacation, enjoying the soft air and the rippling waves at their feet, and watching the boys playing ducks and drakes with shells. Presently they pass an image of Serapis, and Cæcilius kisses his hand to it. Octavius blames Minucius for allowing his friend to remain in heathen blindness. Cæcilius takes the matter up, and they adjourn to a breakwater of stones to rest and discuss it. Then Cæcilius:—"It is deplorable that ignorant men should pretend to certainty, when the

philosophers have never been able to agree on the existence of a God at all. Nature is blind and works by fixed laws without regard to the goodness or badness of men. It is therefore best to worship the gods of our ancestors. Every nation has its gods, and Rome has won the empire of the world by paying due respect to all of them. The only exception to the fixed belief of all nations (beyond an atheist or two like Diagoras) is this gang of skulking desperadoes. They collect men of the scum of the earth and silly women, and cement their conspiracy with nocturnal abominations. It flourishes as wickedness does flourish, and ought to be thoroughly rooted out. They know each other by secret marks; and promiscuous fornication is a positive religion with these 'brothers and sisters.' I hear that they worship a donkey's head; and that is not the worst that is told of them. Some of it may be exaggerated, but they would not be so mysterious if it were not mostly true. Why have they no altars? no temples? no images? no open meetings? For some shameful reason, doubtless. But where did they get that forlorn god of theirs? No civilized nation knows him; only those wretched Jews, who at least worshipped him with a decent ceremonial—and were conquered after all! But what bugbears these Christians invent! The enduring earth is to be burnt up: yet they fancy they will live again themselves, and that for ever! Your god will raise you from the dead forsooth, when he cannot even protect you from cold and hunger while you dream of immortality, from drudgery and sickness, from the cross and death of fire. Rome rules the world and you without your God's help. Meanwhile your life

is miserable. For your fancied resurrection you renounce all lawful pleasures. You abstain from the games, and social meetings, the holy meals—such is your dread of the gods you deny. Give up philosophizing, if you have any decency left. Boors like you cannot understand affairs of state, much less things divine. If you really must speculate, the least you can do is to leave doubtful things in doubt." [1]

Fronto was a vain old man, but upright and honourable, and not unworthy of the respect he won from the emperor Marcus. He is unjust to the Christians only; but in them he can see no good at all. They are knaves as well as fools. He devours every scandal greedily, and never stops to ask what they really mean. In striking contrast to him is the Platonist Celsus, who seems to have written his *True Word* about 178.[2] If he is not behind in hatred of

[1] Minucius Felix *Octavius* 5-13 (condensed).

[2] On the date of Celsus. Origen tells us (*c. Cels. Praef.*) that Celsus was long ago dead, and that the only Celsus he knows, beside one in Nero's time, was an Epicurean who lived under Hadrian and later. This cannot well be our Celsus, who writes as a Platonist, and cannot have merely feigned Platonism.

The passages for consideration are (α) Or. *c. Cels.* viii. 71 *οἱ νῦν βασιλεύοντες*, which points to a joint rule of the emperor Marcus, either with L. Verus 161-169 or with Commodus 177-180. (β) c. 73 *ἀρήγειν τῷ βασιλεῖ*. This points to an undivided rule, and more decided in the same direction is (γ) do. c. 68, where Celsus quotes the Homeric *εἷς κοίρανος ἔστω, εἷς βασιλεύς κτλ.*, and adds *ἂν τοῦτο λύσῃς τὸ δόγμα, εἰκότως ἀμυνεῖταί σε ὁ βασιλεύς*. Lightfoot *Ignatius* i. 531, 593 *n.* takes this as practically decisive that there were not then two joint sovereigns, and probably had not been for some time. So he places Celsus before 161.

Against this there are three considerations. (1) *οἱ νῦν βασιλεύοντες* is too definite to be a plural of category like 1 Tim. ii. 2 *ὑπὲρ βασίλεων*. (2) The unity of the Empire was never supposed to be broken by the existence of joint sovereigns; and in this case it is the unity of rightful power rather than that of the person holding it, which Celsus is urging against Christian self-will. Writers of this period vary a good deal (Ramsay p. 249) between the singular and the plural, and slip for slip, it was easier in the time of joint emperors to slip into the ordinary singular than in the time of one emperor to slip into the definite plural. (3) Besides, (δ) c. 69 *ὑμῶν δὲ κἂν πλανᾶταί τις ἔτι λανθάνων, ἀλλὰ ζητεῖται πρὸς θανάτου δίκην* seems decisive for a later date than

the Gospel, he is quite as learned as Fronto, and far above him in controversial acuteness. In addition to this, he had studied the Christian writings, and got some knowledge of Christian divisions. Nor does he conduct his case unworthily. However hostile he may be, he seems nowhere consciously unfair. Gutter stories, for instance, he passes by. Altogether, Celsus can be trusted to shew us the strongest case that could be made against the Gospel by the ablest and the most cultured of its enemies. We pass over the arguments he puts into the mouth of a Jew, and limit ourselves to some of those he uses himself.

Celsus begins as a Platonist should, with a lofty conception of God as good and self-contained, as passionless and far above the world. Indeed, his chief objection to the Gospel is the gross materialism of the Incarnation. To begin with, it implies change: and surely God is unchangeable. Why should he come on earth? Belike, he did not know what was going on, or wanted to get a little applause. To redeem men forsooth (and only some men) as if the world was made for men! So they flatter themselves, as the ants might, or the frogs of the marsh. Beasts are better than men, and birds know more than we know of the will of heaven. And if he must come, why should he defile himself with a body, or hide himself in a corner of the earth, among those ignoble Jews? Had he appeared like a decent philosopher in civilized countries, there might have

161. Trajan and Hadrian had forbidden *ζήτησις*, and there is no trace of it under Pius: but under Marcus it is usual. (ε) The urgent appeal of Celsus to the Christians to help the emperor points to the calamities of Marcus rather than to the quiet times of Pius.

So Ramsay *l.c.* and Neumann 58, though he maintains that *ζήτησις* was first ordered by the rescript of 176-7.

been some sense in the matter. Besides, redemption is impossible. A man cannot change his nature; and evil is inherent in matter, and therefore a fixed quantity which cannot be diminished. Jesus was a braggart and a sorcerer, who learned his art in Egypt; and his fate is enough to prove his infamy. He could not even discover the treachery of Judas. His miracles are only what the quacks do in the market-place; and as for the prophecies, they will suit almost any one better than such a pest as Jesus. Of his resurrection, the only witnesses are "a frantic woman, and a few more of his accomplices." Yet they have actually made a god of him! Well, turn to their teaching. So far as it is true, they have stolen it from the Greeks, and marred it in the stealing. Plato says things much more elegantly than Jesus. They invent bugbears of Satan and hell-fire, and expect a blind belief. Wisdom and virtue are bad things —only the fools and the scoundrels go down with Christians. Nor can they escape the natural meaning of their own scriptures under cover of allegorical methods of interpretation, which they have no right to use. Their worship too is barbarous—worse than Scythian—for they have no altars or images. Christianity originated in a spirit of sedition, and has naturally split into endless sects. Their martyrs are few; their anathemas are many. Do they fancy they can ever conquer the civilized world? Now contrast with all this fanaticism the reasonable and decent worship of the demons. These are the gods of our ancestors and of the civilized world; and the Supreme is not a jealous god—the more masters the better, and they cannot be insulted with impunity. Return then to your obedience to the gods, and to

your duties towards the emperor and towards your own country.

The offence of the cross is one thing, but the unbeliever's arguments may be quite another. Sometimes they touch only surface difficulties whose removal would not seriously influence him. The ultimate offence of the Gospel has always been its lofty tone of authority. Such a claim cannot be ignored, but must either strongly attract or strongly repel. In early times the difficulty was not so much in the evidence of the Lord's divinity, as in the logical inference of exclusive worship and obedience. Rather than face this, men harped on difficulties of which they made no difficulty at all in other cases. They were willing enough to accept the Galilean as a philosopher, a hero or a wonderworker, or as one god out of many; but they would not give themselves wholly to him. Cases of this sort are the apologist's difficulty. Questions of evidence he may be able to deal with, but he can do very little if the real objection is to a practical inference which no human skill can make clearer than it is already.

Many of the objections he had to meet were utterances of vague race or class prejudice—that the Gospel was not of civilized origin, that the Lord came to a shameful death, or that his followers were men of low birth or wanted literary culture. Passing these over, the definite charges against Christian morals may be grouped under three heads.

Immorality and nameless orgies, as we have seen, are vulgar slanders against unpopular sects in all ages; and as against the Christians in general, they never were much more than vulgar slanders. Yet

they had a colour of truth, for some of the Gnostics were immoral, like the Carpocratians and the Cainites, of whom the former are said (this too may be a slander) to have recognized each other by a mark behind the ear. Reports however which we have traced back into the apostolic age cannot have sprung from Gnostic licentiousness. It may be doubted how far they were deliberately believed by educated men. Tacitus (*sane ille mendaciorum loquacissimus*[1]) and Fronto are plainly picking up their stories from the gutter, and officials like those of Lyons and Vienne may have shared the panic of the mob or been glad of an excuse for yielding to it. But Lucian and Celsus are honourable enough to ignore them, and by the third century they seem to have died away. The later Apologists hardly mention them, and their revival by Theotecnus in the last great persecution was purely artificial. By that time even the mob had ceased to believe them.

The answer of the Apologists is of course an indignant denial. Abominations like these, says Tertullian, are a defiance of the Gospel and an outrage on human nature, though they are not unknown to our accusers. Let them by all means be punished with severity; but let them first be proved, and not taken for granted against any one who confesses himself a Christian. It is quite possible to convict such criminals. There must be accomplices in every case, and cooks present, and dogs. Let us hear something more of them. What a grand success it would be for a governor if he could unearth some miscreant of a Christian who had already devoured a hundred infants! This is a

[1] Tert. *ad Nat.* i. 11.

sound reply; but he rather damages it by arguing[1] that there cannot be any evidence, because Christians will not reveal the mystery of the Lord's Supper, and heathens are not admitted to it—one of the earliest traces of the *disciplina arcani*.

The charge of atheism (so far as it answered to our use of the word) is a strange one. It might have been retorted on the heathens, as in fact it was by Polycarp and Origen,[2] for their "godless multitude of gods" was enough to shew that they were "without a God in the world."[3] Nevertheless, there was a reason for the charge. The heathens, or at any rate the vulgar, honestly did not understand how it was possible to worship a god without an image. The Jews were puzzling enough, though they had at least a splendid temple and a regular service; but the Christians? "Shew us your God," is the perpetual demand. The answer of the Apologists is simple. "Our worship is spiritual, and therefore we have no images to shew you. If we had, we should be idolaters like you." It was not art they objected to, but idolatry. They had symbolic pictures, and were not free from superstition in the matter of relics and amulets; but there is no trace of any veneration of pictures or images before the fourth century, and then it first appears as a superstition condemned by the authorities of the church, as at Elvira in 306. When it became official, the Christian reply had to be exchanged for futile and irrelevant distinctions

[1] Tert. *ad Nat.* i. 7. *Apol.* 7.

[2] Eus. iv. 15 *αἶρε τοὺς ἀθέους* to the crowd. Origen *c. Cels.* i. 1 *τῆς πολυθέου ἀθεότητος*. So Ignatius and Clem. Al.

[3] Eph. ii. 12 *ἄθεοι ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ*. So the contrast of 1 Thess. i. 9 *θεὸς ἀληθινός*. So 1 Joh. v. 20.

between different sorts of worship—futile because nobody ever regarded them in practice, and irrelevant because no scholastic definitions can undo the fact that the saints are worshipped in the same way and under the same beliefs as the gods had been.

But atheism in Roman law was not what we mean by atheism. It was a refusal to worship the gods of the state. The Christian might occasionally be required to worship Jupiter and the rest of "our gods," as by Pliny, but far more commonly the test chosen for him was the worship of the emperor. This was as it should be. Not Jupiter but Cæsar was the link of religion which held the Roman world altogether; and no men knew this better than the great administrators who ruled in Cæsar's courts of justice. Thus the test concerned loyalty rather than religion, and the charge of atheism resolves into the next we come to.[1]

Its chief religious importance is the support it gave to the cry "Down with the Christians" at every public calamity. If it was an earthquake or a barbarian inroad, if the Tiber rose too high or if the Nile did not rise high enough, it was all one. The Christians to the beasts![2] Tertullian may ridicule the cry as quite irrational; but there was an element of reason in it. The Christians were the heretics of that age; and if their refusal of the worship due to the gods brought down the wrath of heaven on the state, reason would that an end be made of them. It was a familiar argument in later ages.

There still remains the charge of political disaffec-

[1] On the charge of atheism Harnack *T.U.* (2e Ser.) xiii. (1904).
[2] Tert. *Apol.* 40. Arnobius i. 13.

tion. Outsiders were really puzzled again by this strange sect of men who stood aloof from the business of the world, and refused even to join its pleasures. Men so "morose" as these must have treasonable designs, especially as they would not swear the usual oath by Cæsar's genius to purge themselves. In an age when duty to the state was counted the first of all duties, the charge was graver than we can easily realize. Celsus winds up with what seems a genuinely earnest appeal to the Christians to give up their undutiful position, "to support the emperor with all their strength, to share his work of righteousness, to defend him, to join him in his wars and bear office under him, and help to govern their country and maintain the laws and sound religion."[1] It was no light crime to evade their plain duty to the Empire which the gods had consecrated and the piety of their own ancestors had handed down.

To a certain distance the answer is triumphant. It is a plain appeal to facts. Are not the Christians loyal subjects? They pay their taxes and are quiet folk. It is not they who hatch the plots or stir the mutinies. You will hardly find one of them in prison for any other crime than his Christianity. "The Christian is no man's enemy, and least of all the emperor's. He knows that his own God has given him a dominion, and needs must love and honour him, and wish prosperity to him and to the whole Empire to the end of the world—for so long shall it endure."[2] So again, "We pray for the emperor, not to those gods of yours who are beneath him, but to the true and living God who is alone above him. So the apostle

[1] Origen *c. Celsum* viii. 73, 75.
[2] Tert. *adv. Scap.* 2.

gave command: but we have a second reason. We know that the convulsions of the end of the world with all their horrors are delayed only by the respite which the Empire gives."[1]

So far well. But the charge of disloyalty includes neglect of public duty; and to this there is no sufficient answer. Tertullian avows[2] that the Christians care for any affairs rather than those of the state. Even Origen only quibbles in his answer[3] that they do not serve in the army because they support the emperor with their prayers, that they fight for their country by educating their fellow-citizens in true piety, that they help to govern it by devoting themselves to the nobler and more needful service of the church of God. All this evades the point—that men have no right to renounce at pleasure their duties to their country. In truth, the duty of Christian men to the state, and in particular to an essentially heathen state like the Empire, was still an unsettled question. The scruples were not unreasonable which shrank from a public life fenced in at every point with all sorts of heathen observances, from the bowings in the house of Rimmon downward to the foul sacrifices which combined in one supreme abomination the three unpardonable sins of idolatry, adultery and murder.[4] There was no security for the Christian till the service of the state was separated from the religion of the gods. With public duty and ambition on one side, conscience and cowardice on the other, it is not surprising if opinions wavered.

[1] Tert. *Apol.* 31, 32.

[2] Tert. *Apol.* 38 nec ulla magis res aliena, quam publica.

[3] Origen *c. Celsum* viii. 73-75.

[4] Conc. Elvira, *Can.* 2 and Dale's comment *Syn. Elv.* 247. Tert. *de Pud.* 5 est et mali dignitas.

But all this was a mere preliminary. However needful it might be to shew that Christians were neither seditious nor immoral, the truth of the Gospel was a further question. If some of the proofs given by the Apologists are strange to us, we must bear in mind that the objections they had to meet are equally foreign to the thoughts of our time. Broadly speaking, Christian doctrine consists partly of the historical facts of our Lord's life, partly of inferences from them called dogmas. Broadly speaking again, in our time the facts are disputed, but the inferences might be allowed to pass; whereas the Apologists found the facts more or less admitted, but the inferences denied. In their time as well as ours there were plenty of idle tales of marvel which made no demand on life and practice; but we see better than they that such tales are self-condemned. There is no caprice in Nature. Granted the fact of our Lord's resurrection, it cannot be an idle story. If in very truth he broke the never-broken spell of death, few will venture now to dispute his claim to reveal the secrets of another world.

If then we bear in mind such differences of thought as these, we shall see why the Apologists laid no more stress than they did on the argument from our Lord's miracles. It was not that their opponents were troubled with doubts about the possibility of miracle. If Cæcilius (or Fronto)[1] says that fate is fixed or law unbroken, he fails to draw the logical inference, that his gods are just as much an idle tale as any miracle. Nor did they seriously dispute the fact of our Lord's miracles; only they ascribed them to magic. Now the magicians of the second century were no mean performers. There is hardly a spiritual-

[1] Min. Felix *Oct.* 5. So Celsus (Or. *c. Cels.* iv. 5).

istic trick of our time with which they are not familiar. They could loose bonds and open doors. They could cast out demons, puff away diseases, call up the souls of heroes, exhibit costly dinners with tables and cakes and dainties which did not exist, make lifeless things to move as living animals, and read the thoughts of men[1]—and what can our mediums do more?

In an age when the resources of imposture were better cultivated than those of science, it was doubly necessary to clear up the difference between miracle and magic; and this the Apologists more or less clearly saw. Already Quadratus appears to be contrasting the permanent results of the one with the evanescence of the other in the single sentence which has been preserved for us by Eusebius. "But the Saviour's works were always present, for they were true—even the men who were healed or rose from the dead; who were not only seen while healed or rising, but were always present, not merely while the Saviour stayed on earth, but also after his departure they remained for a long time, so that some of them continued even to our own times."[2] Justin[3] puts the question whether the Lord's signs might not have been done by magic, but turns straight to prophecy for his answer. Aristides and others pass over the difficulty, and we do not get much further till we come to Origen, who puts the matter on the right footing, by refusing to consider them as isolated wonders without regard to their moral purpose. In the light of their spiritual aim and power, the Lord's signs fall into line with his

[1] Origen *c. Cels.* ii. 34, i. 68. Eunapius, *Vita Aedesii* (case of Sosipatra).
[2] Eus. iv. 3.
[3] Justin *Apol.* i. 30.

teaching and his life, and the whole must stand or fall together as a connected and a *moral* scheme. But the most spirited answer is that of Arnobius, though he scarcely goes so deep as Origen. "Works of magic, were they? Did ever magician do a thousandth part of these? Contrast the wicked works that are laboriously done by incantations, and tell us. Was he one of us, who spoke, and it was done? Was he one of us, whose works were all divine in goodness? Was he one of us, whose mere word or touch cured every form of sickness? who made the lame to walk, the blind to see? who calmed the winds, and trod the stormy waves? Was he one of us, who read the hearts of men? Was he one of us, who raised the dead, and rose from the grave himself? Was he one of us, whose word was never vain, whose power still remains with them that love him to do such works as his? Scoff as you will, and split with laughter if you please, the truth is clear as sunlight. There was neither magic nor fraud in Christ. He is in essence God, sent from realms unknown as God and Saviour by the Lord of all."[1] There is a good deal of difference from magic glanced at here, in the merciful character of the Saviour's signs, in their number, variety and publicity, in the absence of human means, in the never-failing efficacy of his power and in its transmission to others. The case could hardly be better put without going further into the spiritual revelation implied in the very name of *signs*.

The Apologists relied more on the "everlasting voice of Prophecy." If it is most used by the Greeks, it is found in all of them, with the single exception

[1] Arnobius *adv. Gentes* i. 43-53 (condensed).

of Arnobius, whose ignorance of Scripture is amazing. It goes far to confirm the story that they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple, till he had preached Christ in writing. He cannot well have been more than a recent convert, if we may judge by his scanty knowledge even of the New Testament. He never seems to quote it but once, and even then not as scripture, but as "the common saying."[1] Arnobius however is the only apologist who is not quite familiar with Scripture. Now, though there was no very definite theory of inspiration current in the early churches, they firmly believed that God had spoken through the writers of the Old and New Testament, and possibly through some heathen sages also, like Hystaspes and the Sibyl. Thus the early Christians had a very real sense of the historical continuity of revelation, and a fixed persuasion that even the Old Testament must somehow speak of Christ throughout. And were they not right?

Unfortunately, their method was not equal to their thought. Fine and true as the idea was, they had not skill to carry it out worthily. They were wanting in knowledge of Hebrew,[2] and had to depend on the Septuagint version. Thus they got entangled in endless mistranslations, and roundly accused the Jews of cutting out Messianic prophecies which to

[1] Arnobius *adv. Nat.* iii. 6 *illud vulgatum*, with a clear ref. to 1 Cor. iii. 19. Reifferscheid finds in i. 6 *malum malo rependi non oportere* another ref. to passages like Mt. v. 49: but this again may refer only to a common saying.

[2] Origen knew a little Hebrew, but Jerome is the only scholar of early times worthy of the name. Others like Epiphanius and Theodoret may have had a smattering, while Ephrem Syrus (and possibly Irenæus) may have been helped out a little by knowledge of Syriac. The rest shew no trace of Hebrew. Cp. C. J. Elliott in *D.C.B.* "Hebrew Learning."

ourselves seem pure interpolations.[1] Besides this, both historical criticism and the philosophy of history were still in much too crude a state for the successful treatment of such a question. The Apologists are all of them sensible men, and their language is often highly striking and suggestive; but it was inevitable that they should often go astray after the verbal quibbles and allegorical trifling which to heathens as well as Christians represented the spiritual meaning of a sacred text.

A specially interesting sample of the argument from prophecy is the work of Irenæus *In Demonstration of the Apostolical Preaching*,[2] mentioned by Eusebius,[3] but only recently discovered in an Armenian translation. Though it is not an apologetic work, being addressed to a Christian named Marcian, it sets forth the demonstration from prophecy exactly as the Apologists do. Irenæus starts from the rule of Faith and the Trinity, as in his great work, and gives a straightforward narrative of the history of revelation from Adam to Christ, which need not detain us. After further setting forth the Incarnation and the redemption, and that we are under

[1] Justin, *c. Tryph.* 72, 73 gives a few of them.

[2] *Des heiligen Irenäus εἰς ἐπίδειξιν τοῦ ἀποστολικοῦ κηρύγματος.* Von Dr. Karapet Mekerttschian und Dr. Erwand Minassiantz, mit einem Nachwort etc. von Adolf Harnack—Leipzig 1907.

The newly discovered Treatise of Irenæus—F. C. Conybeare in *Expositor* (July 1907).

The MS. is (xiii.) probably 1270-1289, and was copied by order of Abp. John, youngest brother of King Hethum of Cilicia (1226-1270—exactly coeval with St. Louis). It represents an Armenian translation made—Harnack puts it near the end of VII., Conybeare "as old as 450." He is also clear for translation direct from the Greek, while Harnack leaves it an open question whether it was not made from a Syriac translation.

For the date of the work, we can only say that it was written after the *adv. Haer.*—say some time after 190. Of Marcian we only know that he did not then live at Lyons.

[3] Eus. v. 26.

faith, not under law, he devotes the chief part of the work to the particular prophecies of Christ. He begins at the beginning, with an astonishing misreading of the first verse of Genesis, apparently taking *B'reshith* in the beginning for *Bara* the Son. In further proof of the Son's pre-existence he quotes as "Jeremiah," Before the morning star did I beget thee.[1] After one or two more obscure quotations come the Three men at Mamre, Jacob's ladder, the burning bush, and the morning star again, but this time as "David." After one or two more, he comes to the prophecy of Immanuel, and Unto us a child is born: but the government which is upon his shoulder means the cross.

Then the special events of our Lord's life were all predicted. For his birth—The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, A star shall arise out of Jacob, There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, I will raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, viz.—Christ's body at his resurrection. So too his birth at Bethlehem was predicted by Micah, his entry into Jerusalem by Zechariah, his healings and raisings of the dead by Isaiah.[2] Then his sufferings are set forth by Isaiah[3] and Jeremiah[4]—and who shall declare his (divine) generation? David tells of his death and resurrection—I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for

[1] Ps. cx. 3 LXX.

[2] Isa. xxvi. 19.

[3] Isa. lii. 1—liii. 8—lvii. 1, 2.

[4] Lam. iv. 20. Under his shadow shall we live among the heathen. The shadow is his body, for as the shadow comes from the body, so came his body from his spirit. As a shadow it was despised of men, and as a shadow it was trampled underfoot on the way to Golgotha. So too they brought forth the sick into the streets that his shadow might fall on them. (A confusion here with Peter, Acts v. 15.) Or is it a touch of tradition?

the Lord sustained me:[1] and again, Why do the heathen rage? for Herod and Pilate, the procurator of Claudius,[2] were gathered together against him:[3] and Zechariah says, Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.[4] The cross itself is prophesied by Isaiah—I have spread out my hands all the day to a rebellious people,[5] by David—they pierced my hands and my feet,[6] and by Moses—thy life shall hang in doubt before thee.[7] So too David—they part my garments among them, and Jeremiah—they took the thirty pieces of silver,[8] and David—they gave me also gall for my meat.[9] The Resurrection is proved by David—thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive,[10] and, Lift up your heads, O ye gates,[11] for the everlasting doors mean heaven. "If then the prophets foretold that the Son of God should appear on earth (and the circumstances of his life) and the Lord took all these prophecies as of himself, our belief in him is well-

[1] Ps. iii. 6.

[2] Ir. is repeating the huge blunder of *adv. Haer.* ii. 20, no doubt suggested by Joh. viii. 57. But surely Harnack is altogether too *spitzfindig* in suggesting that the writer of the Fourth Gospel made the same blunder. Joh. ii. 20 is no help without evidence that Josephus has blundered also about the building of Herod's temple—Conybeare even calls Harnack's "the only straightforward interpretation."

[3] Ps. ii. 1, 2.

[4] Zech. xiii. 7. Then follows a quotation from "The Twelve Prophets"—And they bound him and brought him as a present to the king. Harnack marks it doubtful: I should see in it a reading of Hos. x. 6. Then comes the apocryphal passage of Jeremiah—And the Lord remembered his dead which slept in the earth, and went down unto them to make known his salvation, and to deliver them.

[5] Isa. lxv. 2.

[6] Ps. xxii. 15-21.

[7] Deut. xxviii. 66—thy life meaning Christ. So Athanasius.

[8] Zech. xi. 12: quoted as Jer. as in Mt. xxvii. 10.

[9] Ps. lxix. 22.

[10] Ps. lxviii. 18.

[11] Ps. xxiv. 7.

grounded, and the tradition of our preaching, that is, the testimony of the apostles, is true." He goes on speaking of the call of the Gentiles and the new power of faith (not law) by which we live, and finishes with a classification of heretics. Some deny the Father by inventing another Creator; some deny the Son by despising the story of his incarnation—and these too are men of little faith; and some deny the Holy Spirit by refusing that prophetic gift of his which makes fruitful our spiritual life. Of all such beware, if you desire to be well-pleasing to God and to receive salvation from him.

The demonstration was the same for the heathen as for the heretic, for the prophets could be quoted as at all events ancient writers. So all this is quite in the style of the Apologists. Irenæus quotes the same texts with the same peculiar interpretations. It reminds us also of the New Testament, especially of the First Gospel, but with a difference. In the New Testament the use of prophecy floats between spiritual illustration and prediction, and the emphasis is rather on the divine purpose in events (ἵνα πληρωθῇ) than on definite prediction, whereas later writers think only of definite predictions of particular events.

If they are all borrowing from some very early manual of proof-texts,[1] which must be at least earlier than the First Gospel, we may safely say that few books have so deeply influenced Christian thought. After all, these strange interpretations do but express the intense conviction of the first Christians that all things must somehow speak of Christ; and we shall not despise them if we are willing to see in them the

[1] Rendel Harris and Prof. Burkitt have this theory.

first gropings after some such a philosophy of history as shall clearly shew the relation every detail must have to the great central fact of the Incarnation.

A third line of argument struck out by Tertullian[1] is the *Testimonium animae naturaliter Christianae*, which we may paraphrase as the correspondence of the Gospel to the moral nature of man. The principle of course underlies the entire work of the Alexandrians, but they make little direct use of it as an apologetic argument. Here again the thought is excellent, the method crude. Tertullian appeals to instinctive phrases—Good God! God grant!—which point to monotheism, and argues from these to the one power which implanted them. This was shallow: but the idea was a fruitful one, and only needed to be worked out on some such deeper lines as were indicated by the Alexandrians.

So far then the arguments of the Apologists are better than the use they make of them. Miracle is a sound argument; but not till it is put into its right relation to common events, as rather an assurance of goodness than a display of power. Prophecy is a sound argument; but not when it is reduced from a convergence of old ideals on what was historical in Jesus of Nazareth to a forced correspondence of particular events to predictions. The testimony of the soul is a sound argument, but not till the deepest feelings of human nature are examined, and shewn to call for such a high priest as became us.[2] But there was a fourth argument which the Apologists thoroughly understood, and pressed with admirable force—the argument from Christian life: and it had

[1] Sketched in *Apol.* 17, and more fully dealt with in his *de Testimonio animae.*

[2] Hebr. vii. 26, where ἔπρεπεν implies that we can judge of his fitness.

the advantage of appealing rather to conscience than to logic. They could throw down the challenge, Are not Christians better than heathens? Are not our common people more virtuous than your philosophers? Is not conversion morally a change for the better? Do we not leave behind, the three great sins of idolatry, whoredom and usury, and become sober and peaceable men, fearing God and eschewing evil? What fault can you find with us, except that we are Christians? But no human skill can put the full force of this argument. Deeper than we know is the appeal of a saintly life, peradventure sealed with blood: and if many of the Christians fell far short of saintliness, there were saints enough among them to overcome the world.

Yet another argument was drawn by the later Apologists from the spread of the Gospel. It is essentially the argument of Gamaliel,[1] that God will not allow his purpose to be finally stultified by men. The fact of course is already noted in the second century, as when Justin tells us that the Jews have a widespread, the Christians a world-wide one. So too Irenæus and Tertullian. But these writers use it at most as a plea for toleration; its apologetic use as a proof of Christianity dates from the third century, and is represented by Origen[2] and Arnobius.[3]

As regards the attack on heathenism, it may be said generally that while the apologists upon the whole stand on the defensive in the second century, they take the offensive in the third. The attack naturally falls into two main divisions. The absurdities and immoralities of Polytheism had been

[1] Acts v. 38, referring to the *specific* promise of the Messiah.
[2] Origen *c. Celsum* i. [3] Arnobius ii. 5.

for centuries a scandal even to heathens of a decent sort:[1] to Tertullian and Arnobius they are an endless theme of ridicule and satire. The excuse of allegory is as scornfully refused to the heathens by Arnobius[2] as it is to the Christians by Porphyry.[3] There were the scandals in black and white, and they must not be explained away. Philosophy was a more serious enemy than these antiquated myths. The Greek apologists treat it with respect, and content themselves with pointing out its deficiencies, and denouncing the rhetoric which was corrupting it. The Latins (except Lactantius) seem to think it enough to reply summarily that the philosophers refute each other. In any case, for both Greeks and Latins, the Gospel is the truth, the revealed truth, and the sufficient truth.

We shall best sum up our account of the Apologists if we now turn from their arguments to some of their writings. Our best samples of Greek and Latin thought will be Clement and Tertullian. Justin is less suitable, because he marks an earlier stage than Clement; and Origen, because he has no plan of his own beyond that of answering Celsus paragraph by paragraph. The difference however between Clement and Tertullian is not entirely that of Greek and Latin thought. Clement is one of the most refined and cultured characters of ancient times. He writes for educated and well-to-do people, and seeks to win them to Christ. So he is scrupulously fair to heathenism, always willing to see its good side, and glad to set down heathens rather as misled than either fools or liars. He can rebuke sin sternly enough, but he

[1] Their demoralizing influences are well summed up by Firmicus 12.

[2] Arnobius iv. 34, v. 32. [3] Eus. vi. 19.

rather wonders how the sinners can so forget themselves. Tertullian is blunt and undiscriminating—a prince among controversialists, for with all his learning and earnestness, his methods are too much those of the vulgar controversialist. If he addresses the "rulers of the Roman Empire," his real appeal is to plain Christians—to prejudice as well as to piety in those *Simpliciores* whose narrowness is so troublesome to Clement. He takes for granted what suits him, and puts it in the most telling way. There is neither sympathy nor mercy nor sense of fairness in him. The harder his hits, the greater the fools he makes his enemies, the better he is pleased. Clement's delight is in preaching the Word as the Guide and Teacher, even of the men that walk in darkness: Tertullian jeers at idolatry and philosophy alike.

Clement's *Protrepticus* begins with a graceful reference to the legends of Orpheus and Eunomus, who charmed the beasts, and even stocks and stones, with their music. But the new song of Christ has done more than this, for sinners are the worst of beasts, and men sunk in ignorance are more senseless than stocks and stones—and it has charmed *them*. Christ the Word, both God and man, is our creator and our saviour. He came on earth (such is the new song) to shew God to men, to stay corruption, to conquer death, to reconcile disobedient sons to their Father. Clement then reviews the different forms of heathenism, popular and philosophical. He begins with the strongest elements of popular religion—the oracles, the divinings, the auguries (all pure imposture) and especially the mysteries, all full of outrage and abomination. "Yet there was implanted of old in men a fellowship with heaven, darkened indeed with

ignorance, but now and again flashing out suddenly from the darkness and shining anew. Ruinous of a truth were the sinful and perverted imaginations which turned away man, the heavenly plant, from the heavenly life, and persuaded him to give heed to earthly inventions." Then he turns to the gods. Some found gods in the host of heaven, others in the fruits of the earth, others in the evil that hunts the wicked to overthrow him. Some of the philosophers have made gods of human passions; others have put in bodily form things like justice and fate. Another set like Homer and Hesiod have manufactured whole families of gods, and yet another have deified benefactors—and forgotten God their true benefactor. The gods of the legends are as immoral as they can be—precious models for your wives and sons. They are dead men and bad men; and their vile example corrupts your whole life. Really, the beasts the Egyptians worship are better than your gods. The philosophers also have gone sadly wrong. Most of them deify the elements, and some of those who aim higher make gods of abstractions like the infinite. The Stoics make their divinity pervade matter, even the basest—and herein are a downright disgrace to philosophy. Aristotle takes the soul of the world for God; and of Epicurus the less said the better, for his doctrine of a God who cares for nothing is impious from every point of view. But the philosophers have not all gone wrong, "for in all men without exception, and in students especially, there is instilled a divine effluence." Plato is in touch of the truth (though he falls short of it) when he says that the Father and Maker of this universe is hard to find; and when found, impossible to declare to all men. Nor does Plato stand

alone, for many others have hinted or like Cleanthes openly confessed the one true God according to his inspiration, by which alone they reached whatever truth they did reach. But if idolatry is untruth, and even philosophy no more than vailed or partial truth, we must go on for pure truth to the prophets—the Sibyl first, then Jeremiah, Moses and the rest. Of their words not a tittle shall pass away without fulfilment, for the mouth of the Lord, the Holy Spirit, spoke them; so that theirs are the holy writings which make us holy and divine. If ye refuse when God calls, what remains for you but judgment and condemnation? Are ye not ashamed? But, say ye, it is not right to unsettle the tradition of our fathers. But if your tradition is wicked and godless, why not reject it as poison, and turn to the truth and to God your true Father? Look at the miserable creatures who serve the idols—filthy and disgusting creatures, and often mutilated. They seem to me rather to mourn the gods than to worship them, and deserve more pity than reverence. Contrast with these captives the joy and freedom of the Christian who has passed from ignorance to knowledge, from folly to good sense, from unrestraint to self-control, from iniquity to righteousness, from godlessness to God. We look for and hasten to unending salvation as the unending gift of God's unending covenant. "Come to baptism, he says, to salvation, to enlightenment. I give thee earth and heaven, my child, if thou wilt only thirst for thy Father; and thou shalt rejoice in the kingdom of thy Lord for evermore." God's purpose ever is to save his human flock: therefore the good God sent the good Shepherd, who laid open the truth and taught men the height of their salvation,

that such as repented might be saved, and such as obeyed not might be judged. Holy are the mysteries indeed, in which heaven is the scene and God the revelation; in which the Lord is hierophant, and bears the light, and seals the candidate, and presents to the Father the believer kept safe for ages. These are my mysteries: come thou too and be initiated, and thou shalt dance with angels round the one true God, and the Word of God shall join our song. His yoke is easy, his burden light. Let us hasten, let us run, O images of the Word, ye men beloved of God and like to God, let us take his yoke upon us and let him rule us, and be winners of God and life eternal. Aye, the life in Christ is life eternal, turning corruption into incorruption, and earth into heaven. It is not fitting that we who are God's image and likeness should waver in the choice between sense and madness, life and destruction.

But no fragments can do justice to the intense and joyous earnestness of Clement's words. It is the sunny hopefulness of pagan Greece, dimmed a little by philosophical contempt of matter, and not free from the old pagan confusion of sin with ignorance, but refined and immeasurably deepened by the love of Christ. The Latins could preach righteousness, the mystics peace; but only the Greeks before the Reformation fully understood that the kingdom of God is also joy: and of the Greeks none understood it better than Clement of Alexandria.

With Clement's gentle pleading compare Tertullian's haughty challenge. Rulers of the Roman Empire, if you are afraid or ashamed to do us public justice, at least allow truth to reach you privately by letter. It is not justice to hate us without knowing

what we are. Criminals are allowed to defend themselves in court; Christians are condemned the moment they declare themselves. Yet if we commit crimes, evidence ought to be forthcoming. Pliny could find none: no more can you. What a muddle Trajan made of it, declaring us criminals, yet forbidding search for us. You say we break the laws—*Non licet esse vos.* Well, your laws do not come down from heaven, and they are not too sacred for you to repeal them every day. But *these* laws! Nero was their worthy author, and even Domitian grew sick of their cruelty. Marcus protected us, and no good emperor ever put them in force. Now what are your charges? (1) Secret crimes? Rumour is not evidence; and you have no other. They are absurd, though they are only what you do yourselves, and that not always in secret. You have not quite given up sacrificing men, and you still feed your beasts on men. Why, Jupiter is a real Christian at murder and incest. (2) Impiety? because we do not worship your gods. What are they but dead men, and precious bad men too? The mice and the spiders understand them. And worthily you treat them! you sell your household gods, and think nothing of melting down a Saturn into a saucepan. You worship harlots along with Juno, set up a statue to Simon Magus, and rank some infamous creature of the palace (Antinous) among the highest gods. Nice tales you tell of them, and nicely you mock them on the stage—the Christians could not treat them worse. You say we worship a donkey's head. Tacitus tells that story of the Jews—but perhaps our fault is, that while you worship beasts of all sorts, we worship donkeys only. According to others, we worship

crosses. Well, half your gods are only crosses, though you are polite enough to dress them up a little. Others make out that we worship the sun like Persians, because we pray towards the East, and keep Sunday. In truth we worship the one true God, the God to whom both Nature and the soul bear witness. The Jewish prophets declared him of old, and afterwards Christ the word, the reason, the power of God, the Son incarnate. Our story is as good as one of yours; and moreover, we can prove it by the voice of prophecy and by the fact of the resurrection, and by our power over the demons you worship. This is the sum of our offence. The impiety is yours, in that you compel men to worship idols against their will, for your law allows anything whatever to be worshipped, except the true God. (3) You call us disloyal, because we will not swear by Cæsar's Genius. On the contrary, we rank Cæsar above those dead gods of yours, and pray for him (not formal prayers like yours) to the God who made him ruler, and is alone above him. So the apostle gave command: and we further pray for the welfare of the Empire, because we know that its fall will usher in the horrors of the end of the world. We share public joys; but our rejoicings are not public indecency like yours. You do but flatter Cæsar with your lips. You never spare him the abuse you learn in the worthy school of the beast-shows; and your hearts are always hankering after a new Cæsar—and a new largess. You are the true loyalists, no doubt, for it is you, not we, who always hatch the plots. God forbid that we should fight: yet we could fight if we chose. We are men of yesterday, and we fill both town and country—we leave you only your

temples. There are more Christians in one province than soldiers in all your army: and we could desolate the Empire without fighting, if we chose to leave it. Our meetings are pious and innocent, our collections of money are given freely and administered as a sacred trust for them that need. Your feasts are luxury and excess; ours are modest and sober—we call them love feasts. We begin with prayer and end with prayer, and go home quietly, not like Mohocks. You are the rioters, not we. If there be drought or earthquake, pestilence or famine, straightway The Christians to the lion—as if one lion could eat them all! Were there no earthquakes before Christ? Aye, and worse calamities than ever befel you since you had Christians to moderate the world's wickedness. Our prayers and fastings bring down rain from heaven for you; and you only harden yourselves in the idolatry which brings down your calamities from heaven. You say that we are no good for commerce. How can that be? We are not Brahmins or hermits, but live among you, and need the market as much as you do. Only, we do not patronize the temples—if Jupiter wants an alms, let him hold out his hand — nor the pandars, the poisoners, the fortune-tellers, and such-like. You furnish the criminals, not we: you will never find one of us in jail, except for being a Christian. The philosophers despise the gods and even bark at the emperor; and you honour *them* with statues and stipends, while you give *us* to the beasts. Quite right too, to make a difference, for philosophers have neither Christian truth nor Christian purity. We are innocent, we are conquerors—the stake is our triumphal chariot—no wonder we do not please our

conquered enemies. You honour classic heroism; ours you count madness. Go on, your Excellencies, do your worst, and let the rabble applaud you. Your injustice does but prove our innocence. The more of us you kill, the more there are of us: the blood of Christians is a seed that will grow. We thank you for your cruelty, because your condemnation is God's acquittal and forgiveness of all our sins.

Setting aside a little special pleading, this is in the main a solid and successful defence. As an argument it is magnificent; and Tertullian's command of sarcasm is unsurpassed in history. But this is defiance, not persuasion; bitter satire, not the gentle pleading of a Clement. If it ever reached the proconsul of Africa, its audacious language would rather suggest to him that Christians were even more dangerous miscreants than he took them for.

After all, the conquering power of the Gospel was not in the arguments of Clement or Tertullian, sound as they were, but in the evidence of Christian life and love, Christian purity and patience. If it was not perfect, it was divine enough to overcome the world. If it might not stay the sword of persecution, it could make the blow uncertain. Fiercely as the storm raged at times, there were many intervals of quiet. Ghastly as the records of heathen persecution are, the work of blood was never done with the infernal thoroughness of papal Rome. Heathenism had a conscience which was not always deaf to the voice within which said, These men are better than we. So persecution was hardly ever uniform or systematic. It might do its worst in one province while the next was at peace. Meanwhile, the evidence of Christian life was working steadily. The slanders

were lived down, the hatred of the mob was overcome, and persecution became more and more a spasmodic effort of the government. And when the public opinion of heathenism had swung round, the last great struggle of Diocletian was foredoomed to usher in the victory of the Christian church.

Books

Works on the Apologists in general are few: the individual writers will be found elsewhere.

CHAPTER XII

CHRISTIAN LIFE

CHRISTIANS, says the nameless writer to Diognetus, "are not distinguished by country, by language, or by customs from other men. They neither inhabit cities of their own, nor use any uncommon mode of speech, nor practise any peculiar mode of life. Their teaching was not discovered by the research of men, and the philosophy they profess is not of men. Though they inhabit Greek and barbarian cities as their lot is cast, and follow the customs of the country in dress and food and general mode of life, their conduct is admirable and altogether strange to men. They live in countries of their own, but as sojourners. Every foreign country is a fatherland to them, and every fatherland a foreign country. They are in the flesh, yet live not after the flesh. Their life is spent on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven. They love all men, and are persecuted by all. They are ignored and condemned; put to death—and made alive. They are dishonoured, and in their dishonour glorified. They are reviled—and bless; outraged—and honour men. Doing good they are punished as evil-doers: when punished they rejoice as being made alive. By the Jews they are warred upon as aliens, and persecuted by the Greeks; and they that hate them cannot tell the

reason of their enmity. In a word, what the soul is in a body, this the Christians are in the world. The soul dwelleth in the body, yet is not of the body: so Christians dwell in the world, yet are not of the world. The flesh hateth the soul and warreth on it, because it is hindered of its pleasures; so the world hateth Christians, because they set themselves against its pleasures. The soul loveth the flesh which hateth it: so Christians love them that hate them. The soul is shut up in the body, yet itself holds the body together: so they are kept in the world as in a prison, yet it is they that hold the world together. The soul though itself immortal dwelleth in a mortal tabernacle: so Christians sojourn among corruptible things while they look for the incorruption that is in heaven." [1]

This magnificent picture is of course an ideal, in the sense that great mischief has been done by writers who treat it as a matter of fact account of what the Christians actually were. On the other hand, it is a fact precisely because it is an ideal, and we should be deplorably mistaken if we summarily set it aside as "little better than a rhetorical exercise." It is not a play of idle fancy, but an ideal which the Christians were striving to realize, and to a fair distance did realize; and therefore it is one of the solid facts of history which we are bound to reckon with.

Before we can fill in its outlines, we must turn aside for awhile from the churches to survey the heathen life around them; and in doing this we shall need no little caution. First, we are ourselves living in such an atmosphere of Christianity as makes

[1] Auct. *ad Diognetum* 5, 6 (a little condensed).

it hard to understand the thought and feeling of a world to which Christ was unknown, or known only as a disreputable god worshipped by some obscure fanatics. Even the enemies of the Gospel in our own time cannot reproduce for us that thought and feeling, for they too are rejoicing in light which comes from Christ, and drawing unawares on his living power. So far as concerns difference from ancient ways of thinking, the unbeliever is not much less modern than the Christian. Again, we must beware of taking our estimate of heathen society straight from satirists like Juvenal and Lucian, romancers like Petronius and Apuleius, or ascetics like Jerome, who tell the most piquant of scandals as everyday occurrences; from reactionists like Tacitus and his admirers (Gibbon in particular) who set down all departure from classical ideals as pure degeneracy, or from apologists like Tertullian, who are more anxious to make the best of their own case than to do their neighbours justice. The worst offenders of all are the modern writers who seem to think that every touch of light in a black picture of the world is a reproach to the church. They have deified the church and diabolized the world with worse than Pharisaic self-righteousness. We do no honour to the Gospel by refusing to see the working of the Spirit of Christ in the world of heathenism, and counting its noble works of patience and faithfulness as no better than "splendid vices." The facts—hideous as they often are—point much less to any general spread of outrageous and revolting vice and corruption than to a state of things we find more or less in all ages and in all countries—much selfish luxury and vice among the rich, much flabbiness and indecision of popular

religion in all classes; but in all classes also much sense of duty and sober living, and more striving after better things than in some later ages. Heathenism had a conscience, and its moral sense was commonly true, though often strangely lenient. If it seldom failed to stigmatize wrong as wrong, the very worst of vices were too often condoned by society like trifling faults—as indeed some of them are in our own time.

The first thing we notice in the heathen society of the Empire is its extraordinary conservatism and strength of class feeling. This was much more marked in Rome than in Greece, where commerce had always ranked higher; but even in Greece it went far. There was reason for it. Where custom fixed a man's place in society, there could be no true regard for man as man, and therefore no real respect for the rights of others, so that if custom was weakened, society was threatened with dissolution. So the Roman Republic, and the Empire after it, was organized in classes. It was aristocratic to the core. The senator looked down on the citizen, the citizen on the freedman, the freedman on the slave; and each of the four main classes fell into sections divided by the same sort of class pride. It is true that the barriers were not impassable. The slave might become a freedman, the freedman a citizen, the citizen a senator; but society required that no one man should be allowed to take more than one step upward. His son might take a second, but he might not. So the emperors gave more offence to society by allowing influence to freedmen than by many of their worst acts of tyranny. It was a standing grievance, mitigated when Hadrian organized a civil

service from the *equites*, and removed when the Christian emperors tacitly reserved high civil office for men of high birth. Pride of class survived the fall of heathenism—it is very marked in Constantine. It survived the Empire itself, as we see in Gregory of Tours, and only vanished when ancient society itself disappeared in the anarchy of the seventh century.

The next thing to notice is that authority was in principle unlimited. The state was omnipotent, in the sense of claiming full control over every department of life. The provincial governors had full civil and military authority, except that Roman citizens might invoke the tribunes, or in later times appeal to the emperor; and every man was a despot in his own family. Human selfishness was quite free, except where the state restrained it for its own purposes. No doubt philosophy and law were softening the harshness of the old Roman discipline; but it long remained an influential ideal.

Women, to begin with the nearest relation of life, were regarded as inferiors, and kept in life-long tutelage to fathers, husbands, and sons. Marriage was a duty to the state, which in course of time the men found so irksome that Augustus had to encourage it by law. He touched human selfishness at the tenderest point, by allowing childless men to receive only half of a legacy, the unmarried nothing at all—and touched it in vain. The burden was still heavier for the women, whom the old Roman law set nearly on a level with their own daughters. There was some reason for so doing, when they were very commonly married at the age of twelve: but it was none the less a real grievance, so that their efforts to

evade it in the unsettled age of the later republic and the early Empire must not be summarily set down to wanton restlessness. They escaped from the control of their husbands by avoiding the ancient forms of marriage which subjected them to it: and when also the tutelage had been placed in friendly hands, or sometimes abolished, they were more free in person and property than they have ever since been (at least till lately) in Christian countries. The great ladies were a power in society, and women like Julia Domna, Julia Mamæa, Victorina and Zenobia are conspicuous even in the brilliant series of emperors who adorn the third century. But if they were free, so was divorce — on both sides, when once the solemn forms were dropped. The old strictness was forgotten, and though we need not believe that it was common for women to count their years by successive husbands, the bond of marriage was without question dangerously loosened.

Children were still more dependent. A father was in no way bound to rear the child that was born to him, but might expose it if he pleased. The mother had no voice in the matter. The power of life and death was complete, even over a son who had held the highest honours of the state: and it included full power of sale or imprisonment at discretion. Under the Empire however it was nearly obsolete, and from Trajan onward its use was more and more severely punished till Constantine declared it murder. Centuries were needed to work out the idea that a father is not the absolute owner but the natural protector of his children; and in Roman law it was never fully realized at all.

The slave had no rights against either his master

or any one else. He was a "live tool," "like any other animal." The old law left him absolutely at his master's mercy. He might be crucified for any reason or no reason, till Hadrian commanded that he should not be put to death without cause.[1] If he offended against the laws, his punishment was always heavier than that of the free man. Where one was sent into honourable exile, the other was sent to the mines. Where one was beheaded, the other was burned or given to the beasts in the amphitheatre for the delectation of the Roman people. He was an utter outlaw. He could give no evidence, except under torture. Even his marriage had no force—his wife was only his "companion" or "fellow-servant,"[2] and his children belonged to his master.

The number of the slaves must have been very large, though it has often been overestimated. We shall judge more safely, not from the thousands who belonged to a few rich men, but from the general impression we get, that a man who owned less than perhaps half a score of slaves was very badly off. Upon the whole, we may safely say that the slaves were much more numerous than the free men: and as this is the economic fact which determined the whole character of ancient society, we must look at it more closely.

It would be a mistake to lay the chief stress on the sufferings of the slaves themselves. Great as these were, even after the Empire had begun to give them some protection, they were not the worst evils of

[1] Spartian *Hadrian* 18 servos a dominis occidi vetuit. Gaius *Instit.* i. 53 sed hoc tempore (non) licet supra modum et sine causa in servos saevire: nam ex constitutione sacratissimi imperatoris Antonini qui sine causa servum suum occiderit, non minus teneri jubetur, quam qui alienum servum occiderit.

[2] *σύμβιος*, *conserva*: frequent in inscriptions.

slavery. We need not stop to shew how cruelty and fear of cruelty and loss of self-respect drove them to the *slavish* vices of knavery and falsehood. This was well understood in the market, where a slave sold cheaper when he had been in slavery long enough to learn his tricks. He did not forget them when he gained his liberty. In fact, the freedman was far from fully free. He still owed reverence to his old master, and was bound to conform to his will.[1] His *patronus* had a claim on him for work, or any other condition he had made, and was his heir at last. And if he failed in duty, he could be punished or brought back to slavery. There was reason in the contempt of society for freedmen. It was natural that they should retain the vices of their former state: and whenever there was rascality or crime to be done, a freedman was commonly a ready agent. But the worst effects of slavery are on the masters; and they extend far beyond the wanton luxury and outrageous cruelty of which only a few, or possibly none of them may be guilty.

The essence of slavery is not any bad treatment of the slaves, however bad it be, but the selfish thought that we may consider some men not as men with much the same rights and duties as our own, but as "domestic animals" or "animated tools." There was a good deal of it in the old factory system, where men, women and children counted only for so many "hands"; and there is still something of it in the religious orders of the church of Rome, where a man becomes less than a man by taking a vow of obedience

[1] In legal language, *reverentia* and *obsequium* were due to the *patronus*. See Fustel de Coulanges *L'Invasion germanique* 96-138. How far the *obsequium* went may be seen from the argument of counsel—*Impudicitia in ingenuo crimen est, in servo necessitas, in liberto officium.*

which even on its purely economic side is occasionally no better than a contract of slavery. No man can hold a tyrant's power with impunity. In ancient times tyranny began in the nursery. Children were surrounded with slaves, and soon found that they could safely use them with the unthinking cruelty of children, while the slaves on their part were often ready to curry favour with them by base services. Many a time the wrong of slavery avenged itself in the corruption of the children of the house. So the governing class grew up in habits of insolence and disregard of other people's rights which threatened the political security of the state; in habits of idleness and contempt of honest labour which undermined its economic welfare; in habits of unbridled lust and carelessness of human life which positively endangered the physical continuance of the race. In this way slavery was the chief cause of the civil strife and internecine wars which ruined Greece and Gaul, and made the ancient world a prey to Rome, and enslaved Rome herself to a Saviour of Society. It was the chief cause of the neglected agriculture and rotten economics which brought the Empire to bankruptcy, and made a desert of rich provinces which the sword of war had spared for centuries. Yet again, slavery more than anything else was the cause of the dwindled population which made the Empire of the world a spoil to scanty hordes of northern barbarians. Rome in former times had triumphed over them and utterly broken them in pieces; but now the wrecks and remnants of the broken tribes were too strong for the civilized world.

Only Israel was free from the curse of slavery. We hear enough and to spare of brigands and zealots and false Messiahs in the last calamitous years before

the Roman war; but the slaves are not a dangerous class as they were in Greece and Rome. The reason is not that there were no slaves, though there may have been fewer than elsewhere. Nor is it simply that they were better treated. They were better treated because they were respected as men. The Law had once for all drawn the sting of slavery when it secured the spiritual equality of the slave by commanding that if he was circumcised like his master he should eat the passover like his master. And this lesson at any rate was not thrown away on the Pharisees, for they ordered that every rabbi should have his handicraft. The worst evils of slavery are done away when neither the slave nor his labour is despised.

But in the Gentile world every relation of life was corrupted by slavery. Marriage was not likely to be pure where men had slave-women and freedwomen at their disposal from their youth. Children were not likely to respect parents who neglected them for pleasure, and left them to the care of slaves. Society was a vast *experimentum in corpore vili*. The men who destroyed the self-respect of slaves naturally lost their own—and their women likewise. Nothing corrupted society so much as the immoral and abominable games and pantomimes, and the murderous man-fights and beast-fights of the amphitheatre: and these were only made possible by the number of cheap slaves. A Spanish bull-fight is a decent and pious business compared with the great festivals of the amphitheatre, where thousands at once turned down their thumbs and shouted to the gladiator to finish his wounded enemy before their eyes. At times it became a frenzy. Even Rome was shocked when

senators and knights went down into the arena, and their women needed to be kept back by law; when empresses gave themselves to gladiators and comedians, and emperors themselves came out before the people —Nero to fiddle and sing like any vulgar Greek, and Commodus to fight with beasts in guise of Hercules. Of the licentiousness and cruelty which flowed back into private life, the less said the better. The paintings at Pompeii are significant—some of them fit only for the cabinet of a Louis XV. Religion was no check: the very temples were haunts of vice. It is not for nothing that St. Paul[1] puts idolatry next to sensual sins, for its practice was largely fornication, its worship a Bacchanalia.

Yet the ancient world was at its worst no more a pandemonium than ours. The standard of conduct may have been lower than with us, and unselfish virtue less common, but human nature was much the same, in most cases rather weak and animal and superstitious than determinately wicked. Slavery was not universal, for there were always many free tradesmen and artizans, who got their living by honest labour. Nor was it always an unhappy relation. There were masters who loved their slaves, though sometimes half ashamed to do so; and slaves who loved their masters, and gave their lives for them in the head-hunts of Roman civil war.[2] Nero himself was buried by his first love, the freedwoman Acte. Some indeed of the most unequal marriages were among the happiest. A freedman lays to rest "his good mistress and wife, with whom he had lived in perfect harmony" for so many years and months and days; and a woman who had been a

[1] Gal. v. 20. [2] Instances in Macrobius, *Sat.* i. 11.

slave gives humble thanks to the beloved patron she has lost, who had stooped to make her his wife.[1] The cold stone seems to thrill with feeling when we come to such inscriptions as these.

Again, if the religion of the state was rather hindrance than help to right living, the state itself was no mean school of virtue. The emperors are a splendid roll of names, for such vile creatures as Nero and El Gabal are no more than breaks in a majestic series of statesmen, philosophers, and generals like Augustus and Diocletian, Marcus and Julian, Severus and Aurelian. By far the larger number of them were men of mark, for they never sank into general mediocrity till the succession became settled in the house of Palæologus. And they were well supported. In the provinces they had a noble series of great administrators, who will bear comparison even with the English rulers of India; and in the army there was no lack of unselfish and faithful generals like Virginius Rufus and Agricola. The centurions who stand out so brightly from the pages of the New Testament are no more than fair samples of the Roman officer in his better mind. Even the common soldier (till Severus and Caracalla tampered with his discipline) seemed lifted above himself by the grandeur of Cæsar's service. The generals failed more often than the soldiers.

Nor were virtue and religion without their preachers, albeit churches there were none like ours. The lawyer stood for right and justice, the philosopher for moral teaching and spiritual counsel, and even the wandering priests of Isis and Cybele could preach purity and devotion, however little some of them

[1] Orelli 3024, 3025.

practised them. Side by side with the old callous cruelty there was growing up beneath the shelter of the Roman peace a new spirit of humanity, as yet weak, but still growing. There is hardly a social reform carried out in the direction of humanity and mercy by Constantine and his successors which had not been called for, and in some cases begun by Seneca and the Antonine jurists, even though the heathen Empire was not strong enough to go through with them.

After all is done that we can do, it is not easy to get a clear idea of the everyday life of common Christians in the second and third centuries. Our authorities do not lay themselves out for it. They tell us pretty fully the ideals and aspirations, and sometimes the persecutions, the controversies and the scandals, but the picture of common life has to be pieced together chiefly from allusions and inscriptions. Moreover, it must have varied a good deal in different places, in town and country, according to the number of the Christians and the temper of the heathen. There was also the broad difference of East and West; and religious life like secular had a local colouring in every district. An almost Christian city like Eumenea must have differed greatly from such an almost heathen city as Gregory found at Neocæsarea. Moreover, Christian life underwent changes as the churches expanded from obscure gatherings to a great organization with elaborate government and ritual, and increasing numbers forced the Christians to come down more into the world. We are already on the threshold of the Nicene age when we see in the third century a new desire to

come to terms with the better sort of heathenism, not by finding Christians before Christ like Justin, or by recognizing the truth in philosophy as Clement had done, but by representing the Gospel as in the main a superior sort of monotheism, and to some extent using vague monotheistic instead of distinctively Christian language. If then we adventure a general picture of Christian life it must be clearly understood that we cannot get more than a rough average, subject to many modifications and exceptions which we must pass over for the present.

The old structure of society was undermined, partly by the disorders which slavery engendered, partly by the growth of commerce and humanity, and partly by the latent universalism of the Empire. The old principle of selfishness was still supreme, but the institutions which embodied it were grievously shaken. Then came the Gospel as a message of love divine revealed in his Person who came down from heaven to minister to men and give his life in life and death for all, that as one died for all, so all should live to him, and be sons of God in him. Thus "in Christ" there neither is nor can be either Greek or Jew, or bond or free, or male and female. The Gospel takes no account of race or class, or even of sex; only of the image of God in all men. National worships were swept away by the coming of the Son of Man, class distinctions were levelled by the spiritual equality of the Lord's Supper, and authority was limited by his teaching that privilege is duty, and power only ministration.

This change from self to unself as the spring of human action is the greatest revolution which the world has seen. To individuals it came as a revela-

tion of life. Christians, says Tertullian, are made, not born; and the living power might reach them in the reasoning of Christian friends, in the reading of Christian books, or in the sight of Christian purity and courage. Justin and Cyprian illustrate the first way, Tatian and Dionysius of Alexandria the second, and we may pretty safely set down Tertullian for the third, while the conversion of Arnobius is ascribed to a dream. Some came over gently from philosophy, like Justin and Clement; others, like Tertullian, turned away from sin with an effort which left a strain for life, and seemed to make sweetness and moderation impossible. But by whatever way the convert came, he "was freed from the slavery of the world, and from the rule of tyrants without number."[1] Taken simply as a gain for human happiness, no greater work was ever done in history than when Jesus of Nazareth swept away the whole intermediate world of "weak and beggarly"[2] gods and demons, and all the slavery of superstition connected with it. Henceforth religion was a personal relation to Christ, and not to lower beings.

But just because the Gospel was personal, it never stopped at the individual. It was a social power from the very first, for the power which claimed the whole man had to cleanse all the relations of life. Outwardly the Christian churches may have been very like the heathen clubs.[3] They had their officials, their meetings, their collections like the rest; and they were as open as the others to people of all ranks of life. The chief difference which struck the outsider

[1] Tatian *Apol.* 29.

[2] Gal. iv. 9. The στοιχεῖα came back as saints, worshipped exactly as the gods had been worshipped: but this was not till catholic times.

[3] Greek θίασοι or ἔρανοι, Latin *collegia* or *sodalitia*.

was that they sang hymns to Christ as a god, and not to Cybele or Serapis. All these might be brethren; but the Christians were not such merely because they all worshipped Christ. It was not a formal unity of worship, but a mystic unity of life "in Christ," where there was no room left for selfishness. And if they loved the brotherhood, they could not choose but honour the image of God in all men.[1]

Far as their practice fell short of this ideal, it rose high enough to make a great contrast with heathenism. In the first place, though charity was not unknown to the heathen world as some over-zealous apologists would have us think, the Christians were the first who organized it as regular work for the churches all over the world, and the first who made it frankly universal. It was a new thing on the face of the earth when the Gentiles of Macedonia made up a contribution for the poor saints at Jerusalem, who were only Jews. The travelling Christian might be asked for his letters of commendation from the church he had left; but his welcome never depended on his nation or his standing in the world. The gifts of Christians at their meetings were not a mere collection, but an offertory, made more often in kind than in money, and presented at the Lord's table. From these consecrated gifts the bread and wine were taken for the Supper of the Lord, and the rest became "a pious trust for the poor, for the orphans and the aged, for those in trouble or necessity, and for the confessors in the mines and the prisons."[2] The

[1] 1 Joh. iv. 12, v. 1. Hatch *Bampton Lectures* exaggerated the likeness of the churches to the heathen clubs. They were societies, and societies for the worship of a god, and sometimes followed heathen ways: but broadly, they were of so different a spirit that such likeness of form as we find does not signify much.

[2] Tert. *Apol.* 39.

church of Rome in particular had in very early times a noble fame for world-wide charity.[1] Nor was the help of Christians limited to Christian sick and poor. In the great pestilence for instance of the third century, when the heathens fled from their nearest relations, the streets of Carthage were almost left to the care of the Christians. Yet it was not the reckless charity which only encourages idleness. St. Paul already tells the Thessalonians to admonish the idlers.[2] No beggars were allowed. Labour was no longer a mean thing, but the first active duty of life. "If any man will not work, neither let him eat." "If any man provide not for his own, and specially those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever."[3] If the stranger "have no craft, provide according to your wisdom how he may live as a Christian among you, but not in idleness. If he will not do this, he is trafficking on Christ."[4] The object was not simply to relieve distress, but to help all to help themselves who could. "For those who can work, work; for those who cannot, compassion." Its inmost meaning is laid before us in the Lord's Supper, at which the offerings were made, and where they formed a chief part of the service. They were not to be given at random, as we so often give merely that we may do like others, or as in later times they were debased into a ransom for sins. They were a gift of thankfulness for the gift of life received—this life and the other forming in organic union the one great gift of life.[5] The poor were the jewels of the

[1] Dion. Cor. *ap.* Eus. iv. 23 says that it was old in 170.

[2] 1 Thess. v. 14 νουθετεῖτε τοὺς ἀτάκτους (the idle).

[3] 2 Thess. iii. 9, 1 Tim. v. 8.

[4] *Didache* 12.

[5] Irenæus iv. 18 on this as the central meaning of the Lord's Supper.

church, as in the legend of St. Lawrence: or by a bolder metaphor they might be the altar—the only earthly altar—and they were the living image of God, so that the fund which fed them was a holy fund, not to be squandered in random charity, but administered with care and discrimination.

There were officials in the churches, but no orders with an indelible character. In all but purely official work, the layman was as the elder, and the elder as the layman. Women were taught like men, and the slave as carefully instructed as his master. He came with his master to the Lord's table, and any day might have to stand beside him before the beasts and the populace of the amphitheatre. There was nothing to shut him out from the highest offices of the churches, or even from the perilous dignity of the bishop of Rome. Pius was the brother of a slave, and Callistus had been himself a slave.

No man was counted unworthy of communion but he who made himself unworthy. Baptism, it was agreed, carried full and free forgiveness for sins committed in the times of ignorance: but what of later sins? Very gross sins entailed exclusion, though St. Paul directed the Corinthians to restore the offender unconditionally if they were satisfied of his penitence. But soon a stricter view than St. Paul's became prevalent, and such sinners were permanently shut out from the churches, though they were not supposed as yet to be for that reason beyond the reach of mercy. Hermas admits the adulterer for once to penance—a second forgiveness after Baptism—only to penance for life, and only as a special measure commanded by a revelation in view of the Lord's return. On the other hand, Dionysius of

Corinth writes to the church of Amastris "enjoining them to receive all that return from any sort of apostasy, from sin, or from heretical error": and the confessors of Lyons and Vienne "loosed all, and bound none." In this unsettled state the question remained till it was forced to the front by the rise of Montanism.

A cognate question arose on the lawfulness of particular trades. Some were clearly impossible for a Christian. The idol-makers, the pantomimes, the procurers and the beast-fighters were commonly required (and helped) to change their occupation, and shut out if they returned to it; but others, like the incense-makers, were less directly mixed up with idolatry or sin, so that their case was more doubtful. There was to be no luxurious idleness for the rich, no shirking of work for the poor. Not Tertullian only, even the gentle Clement of Alexandria grows sarcastic on the vulgar luxury of the rich, and the empty frivolity of the great ladies. "Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."[1] There is no point which the apostle presses more earnestly than the paramount importance of common life and duty. Even his mighty chapter on the resurrection leads up to the sober exhortation to "be stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."[2]

Yet again, all authority was limited by the new social life of ministration. Even the officials were separated by no sharp line from the people by whom

[1] Eph. iv. 28. [2] 1 Cor. xv. 58.

they were chosen and with whom they had to act in concert. They were not a professional class, but men of the world who practised worldly trades like those of physicians, lawyers, farmers, silversmiths, or small shopkeepers. For a time they were checked by confessors and influential laymen; and in any case they could hardly lord it over the flock till they obtained an independent provision in the course of the Nicene age.

As regards family life, women were no longer looked down on as toys and nuisances alternately, but honoured as fellow-heirs of the grace of life. Spiritually they were equal to men, and their marriages were protected by the churches. The stricter rule was that they should first be declared to the officials, then blessed by them before the church, lest they should prove to be sinful.[1] But the blessing of the church was not essential to their validity, even in Africa. Mixed marriages were inconvenient,[2] and there was no blessing for those who contracted them; but the churches disallowed nothing that Roman law allowed, except divorce for other causes than adultery. On the other hand, the unions of slaves which the law ignored were fully recognized by the Christians. Society cared little about these, but unequal marriages

[1] It will be enough to refer to Athenagoras *Leg.* 33 *τοὺς ὑφ' ἡμῶν τεθειμένους νόμους.* Ign. *Pol.* 5 *πρέπει . . . μετὰ γνώμης τοῦ ἐπισκόπου τὴν ἕνωσιν ποιεῖσθαι, ἵνα ὁ γάμος ᾖ κατὰ Κύριον καὶ μὴ κατ' ἐπιθυμίαν.* Tert. *ad Ux.* ii. 9 Unde sufficiamus ad enarrandam felicitatem ejus matrimonii, quod ecclesia conciliat et confirmat oblatio et obsignat benedictio, angeli renuntiant, pater ratum habet. Id. *de Pud.* 4. Ideo penes nos occultae quoque conjunctiones, id est non prius apud ecclesiam professae, juxta moechiam et fornicationem judicari periclitantur.

[2] Inconveniences summed up by Tertullian *ad Ux.* ii 4-6. One of his arguments is an interesting bit of law *ib.* c. 8 Nonne domini disciplinae tenacissimi servos suos *foras nubere* interdicunt? The Lord's freedman must not marry outside the Lord's *familia*, lest the Lord lose his services.

were a great scandal. The law forbade all marriages of slaves and free persons, and of senatorial persons with women of low rank, except in some cases under the slur of concubinage.[1] Even the Christians were not free from the class feeling which upheld the law.[2] It was a bold step when Callistus of Rome allowed such marriages, and he is bitterly reproached for it by Hippolytus.[3] Callistus was before his time: but the general aim of the Christians was to restore the honour of marriage as a spiritual and not a purely sensual union.

Even the weakness of children was protected by the new reverence for life as the most precious of God's gifts. Exposures and such-like tamperings with life were utterly forbidden among Christians, and fatherhood was changed from a species of property to a holy trust. Children were to be taught like their elders all that Christ had done for them, and to be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, to take their place in the *militia dei vivi*.

The very slaves were no longer despised as base creatures, but honoured as men for whom Christ died the death of a slave. They too were sons of God and

[1] Such marriages were made penal by the *lex Julia et Papia Poppaea*, null by Marcus. The law was extended by Constantine, limited to infamous women by Marcian, abolished by Justinian (or Justin—the date is not clear).

[2] Significant distinctions are drawn in *Const. Apost.* viii. 32 *οἰκέτης . . . εἰ μὲν οὖν ἔχει γυναῖκα, ἢ ἡ γυνὴ ἄνδρα, διδασκέσθωσαν ἀρκεῖσθαι ἑαυτοῖς· εἰ δ' ἄγαμοί εἰσι, μανθανέτωσαν μὴ πορνεύειν, ἀλλὰ γαμεῖν νόμῳ . . . παλλακή τινος ἀπίστου δούλη, ἐκείνῳ μόνῳ σχολάζουσα, προσδεχέσθω· εἰ δὲ καὶ πρὸς ἄλλους ἀσελγαίνει, ἀποβαλλέσθω. πιστὸς ἐὰν ἔχῃ παλλακήν, εἰ μὲν δούλην, παυσάσθω, καὶ νόμῳ γαμείτω· εἰ δὲ ἐλευθέραν, ἐγγαμείτω αὐτὴν νόμῳ· εἰ δὲ μή, ἀποβαλλέσθω.*

[3] Hippolytus, *Ref. Omn. Haer.* ix. 12 *καὶ γὰρ καὶ γυναιξὶν ἐπέτρεψεν, εἰ ἄνανδρος εἶεν καὶ ἡλικίᾳ γε ἐκκαίοιντο ἀναξίᾳ* (text doubtful), *ἢ ἑαυτῶν ἀξίαν μὴ βούλοιντο καθαιρεῖν διὰ τὸ νομίμως γαμηθῆναι, ἔχειν ἕνα ὃν ἂν αἱρήσωνται σύγκοιτον, εἴτε οἰκέτην, εἴτε ἐλεύθερον, καὶ τοῦτον κρίνειν ἀντὶ ἀνδρὸς μὴ νόμῳ γεγαμημένην.*

heirs of life, so that there could be nothing essentially base in their labour. With all the bitterness of Hippolytus, he never taunts Callistus with having been a slave. Still their lot was a hard one, especially under heathen masters, and St. Paul advised them to change it if they could.[1] But there was no thought yet that it is wrong to own slaves. The fire Christ came to send on the earth was not the fire of servile war. The slave was bidden to serve even a perverse master, and to give him honest work. Meanwhile the spiritual equality of the Gospel cut the roots of slavery, and might be trusted in course of time to clear away the outward wrong. Slavery was hardly slavery when slaves were frankly recognized as fellow-servants with their masters and fellow-soldiers in the war against the world, the flesh and the devil.[2] Nor did they quit themselves less worthily. Euelpistus the slave went to his death as bravely as the philosopher Justin, and Felicitas the slave-woman stood hand in hand with the matron Perpetua before the slaughter. St. John himself never threw down a bolder defiance to the majesty of the world and Rome than the insignificant slave-girl Blandina on the last of her long days of suffering for Christ, when she was brought into the arena naked before the furious crowd, covered with burns and scars from former torments, yet still with a smiling welcome for the crowning

[1] The opposition of Christianity to slavery is shewn (1) *generally* from the fact that its promises and blessings have only moral (not social) conditions attached to them: (2) *specifically*, from its doctrines of the worth of man as man, of the dignity of labour, and the indifference of wordly conditions: (3) *directly* from (a) 1 Cor. vii. 21 *μᾶλλον χρῆσαι—τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ*, as the tense shews, so that the advice is to take the chance of liberty; (b) Ep. Philemon, where St. Paul does not seem quite to like the relation; (c) 1 Tim. i. 10 *ἀνδραποδισταῖς*, where slave-traders are set down as sinners.

[2] The difference of bond and free seems always ignored in the Christian inscriptions of the catacombs.

horrors that were facing her. Even the hardened populace of the amphitheatre could not refuse her the admiring epitaph, never woman suffered such things as this one.

No wonder if the Christians made an impression out of all proportion to their numbers. Conviction in the midst of waverers, fiery energy in a world of disillusion, purity in an age of easy morals, firm brotherhood in a loose society, heroic courage in time of persecution, formed a problem that could not be set aside, however polite society might affect to ignore it: and the religion of the future turned on the answer to it. Would the world be able to explain it better than the Christians, who said it was the living power of the risen Saviour?

But Christian life was not without its shadows. The early Christians were men of their own age and subject to all its influences, with nothing but their faith to make them better than their neighbours. Even the apostolic age was no golden time of purity. There were shortcomings enough, and scandals not a few. There was lying at Jerusalem, fornication at Corinth, backsliding in Galatia, strife and debate everywhere. Schisms and divisions were just as deep as those of later times. It is the familiar picture of recent converts in all ages. The most splendid victories of loving self-denial are found side by side with scandals and disorders almost inconceivable in a more settled community.

Yet there is one common charge against them on which they must be honourably acquitted. They were neither specially ignorant nor specially superstitious. They had the same education as their

neighbours, and the difference was in their favour, for their doctrine of the unity of God made the unity of Nature more real to them than it was even to the philosophers, and the high value they set on the knowledge of Scripture went far to make sure that serious Christians could not be quite uncultivated. Even a narrow study of Scripture is something of an education, as we see in George Fox and John Bunyan; and as a matter of fact, scarcely any Christian writers of our period fail to reach a decent level of literary merit. Polycrates of Ephesus may be an exception,[1] but Hermas is better than he might have been, and Commodianus (like Gregory of Tours) would seem to use rustic language for a purpose. There is very little genuine rusticity in the literature, though we find it in some of the inscriptions and some of the letters of confessors in Cyprian's time.

Nor were they more superstitious than their neighbours, but the reverse, though it must be allowed that superstition gained on them in the third century. They shared (and had reasons of their own for sharing) the common belief in relics, amulets, etc., but they were nearly free from the boundless credulity of the heathens about omens and portents. Their religion at any rate lifted them above the belief in worldly success which is the only thing that gives importance to omens and portents; and their doctrine of providence greatly mitigated the rest of their superstitions. We must not summarily condemn them for not being altogether men of another age. Joseph Glanvill and John Wesley believed strange

[1] If seven of his relations had been bishops, Polycrates is likely to have been a man of some rank in the world.

things; but we do not therefore set them down as fools.

The *militia dei vivi* in the midst of a heathen world was full of snares. Christian belief was much easier to settle than Christian conduct. Men had need to walk warily when the pomps and vanities of the world met them at every turn. Some professions were essentially immoral, and on these there could be no doubt. Others were so closely connected in practice with idolatry that no Christians could safely adopt them. The soldier's case was not so clear. The common soldier indeed might have to witness heathen ceremonies, but was not required to take an active part in them; and such passive presence was counted lawful by all but the zealots.[1] But the centurions and higher officers had to perform the rites; and though they might be excused, as they commonly were in the quiet times after Gallienus, they never could reckon on being excused. Any day might bring them face to face with a duty which all parties understood to be a denial of Christ.[2]

Public life was everywhere fenced with worship of the gods. The Senate began its debates with a libation on the altar of Victory, the general took the auspices before a battle, and the soldier swore his oath of loyalty before the gods. The public games were either murderous or immoral, and almost always consecrated by some foul worship or other.[3] Even private life was beset with idolatrous observances.

[1] *Const. Apost.* viii. 32 only gives the Baptist's charge to the soldiers. The discussion of doubtful occupations represents Christian opinion much better than Tertullian *de Idol.*

[2] Calder and Ramsay in *Expositor* Seventh Ser. vi. 385-419 (Nov. 1908).

[3] Paul Wolf *Die Stellung Christen zu den Schauspielen*, Wien 1897, sums up the subject.

If a man walked on the shore at Ostia, his heathen friend would throw a kiss to an image of Serapis. If he paid him a visit, he would find the household gods beside his hearth; and if he went to a dinner party, the meal would begin with a libation, and might consist of meals offered to idols, and be enlivened by lascivious dances. Of the pictures which might adorn the room, the less said the better. Real abominations were doubtless the exception rather than the rule: but they were certainly commoner and less seriously blamed than they are now. Offence was everywhere, and could not always be avoided without complicity in heathen worship or immorality.

A mixed marriage was an especially hard case, though Tertullian's picture of it is overcoloured for a purpose. "How can a woman serve two masters, the Lord and a husband—let alone a heathen husband? If there is a meeting to attend, he gives her an appointment for the baths. If there are fasts to be kept, he chooses the day for a dinner party. If she has a charitable errand, never is household work more in the way. For who would let his wife go round street by street to other men's houses, and indeed to all the poorer cottages, to visit the brethren? Who will willingly let her be taken from his side for nocturnal meetings, and especially for the all-night service at Easter? Who will let her go without suspicion of his own to that Lord's Supper which they defame? Who will let her creep into a prison to kiss a martyr's bonds, or even to give the kiss of peace to one of the brethren? God's handmaid is persecuted with the odour of incense at all the festivals of the demons, and on every day of public rejoicing. She will dine with her husband in

clubs, often in taverns; and sometimes she will minister to the unjust—the very men she was to judge hereafter."[1] This, he complains, is the reason why some Christian women followed bad heathen example by marrying slaves or freedmen whom they could keep in entire dependence.

The hardest case of all was that of the slaves, who had nothing to shield them from the worst caprices of their masters. The most highly placed of them might be sent at a moment's notice any day to the hopeless misery of the field-gang. Yet even here Christian patience and fidelity could sometimes win favour, or at least connivance. We read not unfrequently of Christian slaves and freedmen in positions of trust and consideration; and every now and then the master may have owed the light of life to the teaching of a slave.

The question of duty was in any case a hard one, so that it is not surprising that some Christians cut the knot by keeping as far as they could from a world like this. They renounced not only its idolatrous pomps and vanities, but its society and learning, and all the healthy influences of common life among their fellow-citizens, as if they could not serve God except in pietistic coteries of their own. They forgot that the Lord who denounced the pietistic Pharisees had not despised the schismatic woman of Samaria. The plan certainly simplified matters; but it threw away the witness of Christians as lights in the world, and it gave just offence to the heathens by treating them as no better than "this people, who knoweth not the law." It turned Christians into Pharisees.

[1] Tert. *ad Uxor.* ii. 3-6 (condensed). The last ref. is to 1 Cor. vi. 3.

But the more common tendency was the other way, especially in later times. The new convert might in good faith renounce idolatry, receive baptism and attend the common worship without at first seeing that these Christian "mysteries" called for a much more serious change of life than others. Thus in St. Paul's time some of the Corinthians saw no harm in fornication, or in attending dinner-parties in an idol's temple. They were used to such things, and slow to see why Christians need give them up. There was good reason for the heavy stress laid on the moral teaching of catechumens. Some of the Gnostics were laxer still, and before the third century the mischief was conspicuous. Vague charges of worldly living need not count for much, and some of the specific charges may be dismissed as exaggerated or over-scrupulous: but after all allowances, facts remain to shew that Christian life was much infected by the low moral tone of its heathen surroundings, and the vulgar luxury of the rich. It was not only that women were frivolous and given to finery, or that men — even bishops — were absorbed in the pursuit of usury and filthy lucre. Christians might be seen in the dress of a heathen priest; and we hear so much of the foulest imaginable sins that we cannot suppose them very rare. The great decline of Christian life in the fourth century is partly imaginary, because we compare it with an idealized past; and though a vast amount of it was real, the change was neither so rapid nor from so high a level as it is often supposed to be.

Asceticism is a subtler enemy of Christian life than pietism or worldliness. Are not God's gifts almost as dangerous as the devil's? Is it not safer

as well as braver to refuse them than to let him tempt us with them? Worldlings will see the true saint in the ascetic who has courage forsooth to renounce the pleasures which enslave themselves; and men of a better sort are tempted to admire his unthankful cowardice as the victory of faith, which fleeth from the world. Asceticism is the reaction of the natural man from the grosser sins that shock him, and rests on as low a view of human nature as any sinner's. Thus it is always strongest in times when hope is weakest, and vice most open. It was an element in the wisdom of Egypt and in the Stoic *αὐτάρκεια*; it balanced after a fashion the worst excesses of Syrian immorality, and it was very generally revered as the higher life, the true philosophy, and the best means of drawing near to the gods. Thus the early Christians found it in the air around them; and their long resistance to it is one more proof of its essential heathenism. It had to be dealt with from the first. Our Lord himself "cleansed all meats";[1] and St. Paul tells the Romans that vegetarianism is a matter of personal taste, and on no account to be made a question of right and wrong. So he reminds the Colossians that though ascetic timidity—"handle not, nor even taste or touch"—has a repute of wisdom, it is wisdom of a very undesirable sort, and of no value at all, but tends only to glut the carnal nature.[2] A few years later he tells Timothy to give

[1] Mk. vii. 19 *καθαρίζων πάντα τὰ βρώματα.*

[2] Col. ii. 23 *οὐκ ἐν τιμῇ τινι πρὸς πλησμονὴν τῆς σαρκός.* So Ellicott and Meyer. Lightfoot more smoothly, "not of any value to remedy indulgence of the flesh." But I cannot see that *πλ. τ. σαρκός* only "applies to coarse sensual indulgences." If so, where is the contrast to *ἀφειδία σώματος*? St. Paul does not so limit the *ἔργα τῆς σαρκός* in Gal. v. 19, and is not likely to have forgotten that asceticism tends quite as much to pride and strife as to "coarse sensual indulgences."

up drinking water, and plainly says that hindrance of marriage and commands to abstain from meats are doctrines of demons and deceiving spirits, the work of lying teachers and shameless hypocrites.[1] The danger was real, and would have made its way quicker if his warnings had been less urgent. Upon the whole, Christian life was for a long time too strong for asceticism. It leaned more to Puritan fear of sin, refusing rather certain pleasures as dangerous than pleasure generally as pure temptation. Indeed, the picture drawn in Clement's *Teacher* is in this respect very like the best English life among serious men of all parties in the seventeenth century. And this is a much truer view of Christ's teaching than the gloomy pietism of Tertullian, which counts it almost discreditable for a Christian to die otherwise than as a martyr.[2]

Asceticism however shews itself most clearly on questions connected with marriage; and here the heathen influence first comes out as usual on the heterodox wings of the Church. The apocryphal Acts constantly represent marriage as essentially unclean, and some of the Gnostics either like Marcion made it a bar to baptism, or with Tatian denounced it outright as "defilement and fornication."[3] These last were called Encratites, and abstained also from eating things with life. Small wonder if the churches were slowly infected with the idea that it is inconsistent

[1] 1 Tim. iv. 1-3.

[2] Renan is a thorough Romanist in his belief that none but the monk takes Christianity seriously. "In reality the Gospel is the essential rule of life for every monastic order. The perfect Christian is a monk, the monk a consistent Christian; the convent is the place where the Gospel, everywhere else Utopian, becomes a reality." So he makes every repudiation of asceticism a repudiation of Christ's own teaching.

[3] Irenæus i. 28; *φθορὰν καὶ πορνείαν.*

with the higher life, and even where allowed (except perhaps strictly for a single purpose) is little better than a licensed sin. Its aspect of "mutual help and comfort," was hard to realize in "the present necessity" of that evil-minded heathen world.[1] It forms the whole ideal of Tertullian's beautiful picture of Christian marriage,[2] only because he makes it little more than a partnership of religious observances, and refuses to recognize the care of children as a blessing at all, counting it mere burden and temptation. This means that he is taking the coarse animal view in which the ascetic and the sinner are cordially agreed; and in his Montanist days it comes out without disguise. There he maintains that there is no difference between marriage and fornication but what is made by law, so that it is the desire itself, not any circumstances of sin, which the Lord counts as bad as adultery.[3] Asceticism is even more the offspring of impurity than the reaction from it.

The movement followed three main lines—the objection to second marriage in any one, the objection to any marriage in the clergy, and the gross estimate of virginity. First as regards the objection to second marriage as a lower state for the laity,[4] and a forbidden state for the clergy. In point of fact, it is far from certain that St. Paul forbids the ordination

[1] 1 Cor. vii. 26 *καλὸν διὰ τὴν ἐνεστῶσαν ἀνάγκην* is better so explained from *v.* 1 *καλὸν . . . διὰ δὲ τὰς πορνείας* (nearly = *πρὸς τὴν σκληροκαρδίαν ὑμῶν*) than referred to expectations of the Lord's immediate return which the writer had ceased to hold, if he ever held them at all.

[2] *ad Ux.* ii. 9.

[3] *Exh. Cast.* 9 Leges videntur matrimonii et stupri differentiam facere . . . commixtio carnis, cujus concupiscentiam dominus stupro adaequavit . . . (nuptiae) ex eo constant, quod est stuprum.

[4] Yet Hermas, Clement, *Const. Apost.*, and even Tertullian *ad Ux.* i. 7 (early work) distinctly admit that it is not unlawful.

of a digamist, even for the church of Ephesus;[1] but his words were very commonly so understood. Hippolytus for example takes it as a matter of course that digamists were not ordained. Montanists and others rested their objection on the "one flesh" argument, that marriage is an eternal relation, as when Athenagoras calls it "a respectable form of adultery." But more commonly it was condemned only as a discreditable concession to the flesh. Yet many of Tertullian's arguments against it even before he was a Montanist, tell equally against a first marriage. Thus, if it is only "better" to marry than to burn, it cannot be good. Why should we seek for the bitter pleasure of children? When we have them (had he any himself?) the best we can wish for is to see them safely delivered before ourselves out of this present evil world. Are we so sure of our own salvation that we can safely take upon us the burden and temptation of children? Will it not be shameful if the Lord finds us marrying and giving in marriage?[2] In his Montanist works he goes further. Something like the early Puritans of Hooker's time, he argues that what we do not find permitted by the Lord himself is forbidden. The apostle's permission is not a real permission, for if he had wished it, he would not have permitted, but enjoined it.[3] But all this is Tertullian: it does not appear that Christian opinion sanctioned this pietistic want of faith much more generally then than it does now.

[1] 1 Tim. iii. 2 *μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἄνδρα* need not mean more than one who has never had unlawful relations.

[2] *ad Ux.* i. 3-5.

[3] *Exh. Cast.* 4: forgetting that St. Paul expressly "wishes" the younger widows to marry and bear children (1 Tim. v. 14). He limits 1 Cor. vii. 39 to women converted since widowhood, for marriage before Baptism does not count (*De monogamia* 11).

The next step was to discourage marriage altogether for the clergy, on pretence of a higher law of purity than the apostles themselves had observed. But no very serious advance in this direction can be traced before the Nicene age. Cyprian, for instance, denounces Novatus not for having married a wife, but for having made her miscarry with a kick.[1] It is true that in the third century (*e.g.* Hippolytus) we find a good deal of dislike to marriage after ordination; and the Council of Elvira (*cir.* 306) actually forbids the use of marriage to the clergy.[2] But this was only a local council in Spain, and its opposition to the general feeling of the churches is shewn by the rejection of a similar proposal at Nicæa, by the unrebuked prevalence of marriage among the clergy of the next age, and by its actual requirement from the parish priests of the Eastern church to this day. On this question, Rome is the dissenter.

The Lord spoke to all that bear his name when he said, Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. But we find almost from the beginning an endeavour to make two standards of Christian life—one for saints, the other for common people—and to find the difference, not in any greater holiness, but in a stricter life, and especially in the physical fact of virginity. Even St. Paul finds it needful to remind the Corinthians that while it is a fine thing not to touch a woman, there are very good reasons why marriage should be the rule.[3] The double standard appears in the *Teaching*. "If thou canst bear the whole yoke of the Lord, thou shalt be perfect: but if thou canst not, do what thou canst."[4]

[1] Ep. 52.
[2] Can. 33.
[3] 1 Cor. vii. 1.
[4] c. 6.

So too Barnabas. Clement and Ignatius find it necessary to warn those who have the gift of continence against boasting of it; and Hermas speaks of winning higher praise "by doing more than God has commanded."

Accordingly, we find early traces of those who devoted themselves to virginity, with fastings and prayers and abstinence from flesh and wine: and they were looked up to, not as serving God in a particular calling, but as if this was altogether a higher calling. So the virgins gradually take precedence of the widows in church order. For a long time these ascetics lived in the world an austere life, but without taking public or irrevocable vows or trampling down the duties of common life and common work.[1] Narcissus of Jerusalem lived for awhile the life of a hermit, though largely in resentment of false charges; but Paul of Thebes is only an invention of Jerome. The story however is so far true, that there were many fugitives from the Decian persecution;[2] and though most of them returned or perished, it is not impossible that a few remained as hermits. But the first ascetic community of which we have definite knowledge was formed at the end of the third century by Hieracas at Leontopolis in Egypt. It was formed partly for study, but even more for the practice of asceticism.[3]

[1] Koch *Virgines Christi* T.U.[3] (1907). Before the Nicene age there was no public vow and no formal admission. If vows were taken, they were private affairs: and if they were broken by marriage, the offence was not considered serious. The penance imposed was that of an ordinary second marriage. It contrasts very strongly with those imposed for grave sins, and with the savage punishments inflicted by church and state in later times.

[2] Dion. Al. *ap.* Eus. vi. 42.

[3] The corporate monasticism of the Nicene age is in the main of Coptic origin—most of the early monks bear Coptic names. It is worth asking

The whole ascetic tendency in its widest compass depended partly on the legal conception which made it possible to believe that actions as such were meritorious, or that one action is more meritorious than another, partly on the properly ascetic doctrine that it is safer to refuse the gifts of God in this life than to receive them, and partly on the misgiving of the natural man that the good news of free forgiveness is too good to be true. The misgiving is found in all religions.[1] The Jews had it, as where the book of Tobit tells us that almsgiving is a release from death, and a release from sin. As the Christians were agreed that all sins are forgiven in Baptism, the tendency was to place there a limit to free forgiveness, leaving sins after Baptism to be atoned for by the merits of such good works as fasting and almsgiving—for there was no idea yet of turning the Lord's Supper into a sacrifice for sin. So Tertullian calls good works a *satisfactio* for sin, and ascribes to them the power "to appease an angry God"; and Cyprian goes further still. On similar principles right belief was itself counted as a good work, so that the tendency was more and more to value orthodoxy above piety, and to count wrong belief worse than wrong doing. This was the idea which did so much to embitter the partizanship and persecution of the Nicene age, by giving a sort

whether some of the earliest Christian monasteries may not have been heathen monasteries converted wholesale to Christianity, but continuing their old rule of life with little or no change. This however is a question which must be left to Coptic scholars.

Of course individuals might "renounce the world" anywhere. The last discovery is the case of Eugenius of Laodicea. Ramsay *Expositor* Seventh Ser. vi. 546 (Dec. 1908).

[1] As a modern writer says, who counts himself a "good churchman," It is absurd to say that Christ died for our sins, for they were not then in existence.

of consecration to hatred and malice and all uncharitableness.

Christian life properly began with Baptism, for Baptism was the convert's confession before men, the soldier's oath (*sacramentum*) which enlisted him in the service of Christ. Till that decisive step was taken, he could not be more than a friendly heathen. Even as a catechumen, he was on one side exposed to little danger before the time of Severus, while on the other he was not fully acknowledged by the Christians as one of the brethren. The primary significance of the rite in early times was confession before men.[1] At first it was very simple, and administered with little delay to any one who professed belief and repentance. The danger of the request fairly guaranteed its sincerity. But here we are at the outset of a long development. It was soon found that the convert needed fuller instruction, not only on the facts of the Gospel, but on the moral duties which he undertook in Baptism. The heathen took them too lightly, and even the Jew did not always bring a worthy conception of them. So we find the apostolic letters addressed to men who had been taught the facts of the Saviour's life, and needed chiefly to be shewn how searching are his claims, and yet how ample is the power that comes "in Christ" to satisfy them. Presently it was thought best to put more of this instruction before Baptism, and establish a regular catechumenate, which tended in course of time to become longer.

[1] It is interesting to compare our Lord's words Mk. xvi. 16 with St. Paul's Rom. x. 10. Faith *plus* Baptism seems equated to Faith *plus* confession before men.

The Clementines mention three months, while the Council of Elvira prescribes two or three years. If however the catechumen was imprisoned for his faith, he might be baptized at once, as Perpetua was; and if he was put to death while still a catechumen, such confession before men—the so-called baptism of blood—was reasonably deemed equivalent to Baptism. On the other hand, the catechumen was in a state of probation, free to attend the reading and certain of the prayers, but not allowed even to witness the Lord's Supper: and in case of misconduct, his full reception might be considerably delayed.

The rite was very simple, as described by Justin in the second century.[1] After more or less of instruction, the candidate declared "his belief in our teachings, and his willingness to live accordingly." Then he might be directed to fast for a short time by way of preparation. He was then taken "to a place where there was water." Here he made his formal confession, and here he was baptized by immersion in the name of the Trinity. After this he was taken to the meeting, and received by the brethren.

This order of Baptism seems quite primitive. Some look on the mention of the Trinity as a development: but there is no need to understand baptism "into Christ" as implying an earlier Formula of baptism into Christ only, and therefore no reason to doubt that the Baptismal Formula of Matt. xxviii. 19 is a genuine saying of the Lord, or that it was regularly used from the first.[2] It would be too much to suppose that Justin gives a full description of the

[1] Justin *Apol.* i. 61. The account in *Teaching* is very similar.

[2] To the best of my judgment, Bishop Chase, *Journ. Theol. Studies* vi. 481 holds the field on this question.

ordinance, and in fact he does not mention its formal completion by the laying-on of hands, which seems to come down from apostolic times. But there cannot have been much further ceremonial at "a place where there is water"; and the only clear trace of development is where he tells us that it was called φωτισμὸς (illumination) like the heathen mysteries.

But Justin is describing the usual reception of a convert; and there must have been more or less exceptional cases from the first. These cases would be baptism of infants, and baptism without immersion. As regards infant baptism, there can be little doubt that it dates back to the apostolic age. The Jewish custom of circumcision was suggestive, and Polycarp was almost certainly baptized in infancy. He "had served Christ fourscore years and six"; and as he had made a long journey a year or two before, he cannot well have been older. Justin also speaks of men who "had been made disciples from childhood,"[1] and this may mean infant baptism; but the first case we can name for certain is Origen's in 185. In the next century he tells us that the apostles had commanded it, and Cyprian[2] has to reprove a Judaizing superstition connected with it, that the new-born infant is unclean for seven days, so that it ought not to be baptized before the eighth.

On the other hand, we have decisive evidence that infant baptism is no direct institution either of the Lord himself or of his apostles. There is no trace of it in the New Testament. Every discussion of the

[1] Compare Justin *Apol.* i. 15 ἐκ παιδῶν ἐμαθητεύθησαν with Mt. xxviii. 19 πορευθέντες οὖν μαθητεύσατε. Clem. Al. p. 289 τῶν ἐξ ὕδατος ἀνασπωμένων παιδίων cannot safely be quoted, for he may be thinking here as elsewhere of Christians generally as children. Irenæus *Haer.* ii. 22. 4 is clear.

[2] Cyprian, *Ep.* 64 *ad Fidum.*

subject presumes persons old enough to have faith and repentance, and no case of baptism is recorded except of such persons, for the whole "households" mentioned would in that age mean dependants and slaves as naturally as they suggest children to the English reader.[1] St Paul's argument—"else were your children unclean, whereas in fact they are holy"[2]—is a two-edged sword. On one side, he could not well put the holiness of the child on the same footing as that of the unbelieving parent, if one was baptized and the other not. But conversely, if the child of even a mixed marriage is holy, surely it is a fit subject for baptism. If St. Paul disproves the institution, he approves its principle.[3] In spite of Origen's round assertion, the question remained open for at least another century. Tertullian objects to the practice, on grounds which shew very little trust in Christ, but evidently in the full belief that nobody imagined that there was any apostolic ordinance against him. Even in the fourth century some of the best women of the time, like Anthusa and Monnica, did not feel bound to baptize their children in infancy; and a writer of no less unquestioned orthodoxy than Gregory of Nazianzus advises that it be put off till the child "can frame to speak the mystical words." This is every way illogical: but at all events it gives up the principle of Infant Baptism, that even the infant of an hour belongs to Christ.

Immersion was the rule. The Jews were very

[1] This is the usual sense of *οἶκος* in N.T, when it is not a building. In the same way *familia* does not mean *family*.

[2] 1 Cor. vii. 14.

[3] Similarly, while it is absurd to quote Mk. x. 14 (of such is the kingdom of God) or Acts ii. 39 (the promise is to you and to your children) to prove that the practice existed, they are very sound arguments that "it is in excellent accordance with Christ's institution."

strict, holding that even a ring on a woman's finger prevented complete immersion: and though the Christians were not likely to be so pedantic, the whole symbolism of Baptism requires immersion, and so St. Paul explains it.[1] Immersion however might often be inconvenient or even impossible. Perpetua, for example, cannot well have been immersed, for she was baptized in prison. So for reasonable cause the actual immersion might be replaced by pouring or sprinkling as a symbol of immersion. Pouring is allowed as early as the *Teaching*, and sprinkling was used for the baptism of the sick. This baptism at the bedside (therefore called clinical baptism) was considered quite valid, but slightly discreditable, as not being a full confession before men. In Cyprian's time we find it made an objection to ordination, though an objection which the bishop might set aside, as Fabian of Rome did in Novatian's case.[2]

In Tertullian's time,[3] half a century after Justin, we find a considerable development. The candidate renounces the devil and his pomp and angels before the bishop and the congregation; and renounces them again (*abrenuntiatio*) as he enters the water. He makes his confession in a form taught him beforehand (*traditio* and *redditio symboli*). This form was "somewhat longer than the Lord laid down in the Gospel," and therefore some such slight expansion of the Baptismal Formula as may have been used at Rome:—

[1] Rom. vi. 3-5.

[2] So the Council of Neocæsarea, *Can.* 12, makes it a bar to ordination as presbyter, because it is not a voluntary confession; but it makes an exception for special merit or for scarcity of candidates.

It is worth notice that immersion is still the rule of the Church of England, and every now and then an adult claims it as a right, though we never hear of an infant who "may well endure it."

[3] Tert. *de Cor. Mil.* 2.

I believe in God the Father,
the Lord Almighty;
in Christ Jesus his only Son,
the Lord our God;
and in the Holy Spirit.

It varied in different churches: but whatever it was, this was all that the candidate declared with his own lips. Thereupon he was immersed, not once but three times, in the name of the Trinity. On coming up from the water he was given to taste a mixture of milk and honey, and eschewed the bath for a whole week. Elsewhere[1] he tells us that Baptism was followed at once by "the blessed unction," and that again by the laying-on of hands, "that by the blessing they might call and invite the Holy Spirit."

In the course of the third century we find other developments, largely due to the growing belief that the sacraments were mysteries. As the Christians were no great lovers of the heathen mysteries, there may not have been much direct imitation: only Christian mysteries could not fail to resemble them. There grew up for instance the exorcism of candidates. The devils of heathenism had to be cast out like any other devils. Then there was the sanctification of the water. This suited well the Stoic conception of Tertullian, that if all things are material, the material element of water will have a direct action on the material soul. The custom also was for the neophyte to wear white linen for a short time. In the Nicene age, when the baptisms of the year were held as much as possible together at Easter, the white robes were worn till the following Saturday inclusive.

Though the principal change which Baptism has

[1] *de Bapt.* 7. 8.

undergone falls a little beyond our period, we may do well to glance at it, for the early stages of a movement are often best understood in the light of its later developments. In the New Testament, as we have seen, adult baptism is the rule, so that infant baptism cannot be more than an adaptation of the ordinance. However good the reasons for the adaptation, an adaptation it is, and it must be explained as an adaptation of adult baptism. To reverse the relation, explaining the baptism of adults by that of infants, is a fundamental mistake. Of that however there was little danger in times when the churches increased more by conversions than by births. But when persecution ceased, early in the Nicene age, Baptism lost much of its primitive character of confession before men; and the rest of it gradually disappeared as the baptism of infants became the common case, and that of adults the exception. But when the baptism of infants became a rule, as it did after the fourth century, there was no small risk of turning the sacrament into a piece of magic, which works without regard to moral conditions; and this risk was not entirely removed by the use of sponsors (first found in Tertullian) to connect the infant with the conditions of adult baptism. There was still a temptation to transfer those conditions too summarily to the infant, as if the promises annexed in Scripture to faith and repentance, and to faith and repentance only, must of necessity belong equally to innocence. When once we come to this, we build up the whole theory of Christian life on an assumption we have no right to make.

The Gospel lays down no distinctions of sacred and profane. Church and State, elder and layman,

holy day and common day, meeting place and market —all are claimed alike for Christ, and therefore all alike are holy. Nothing is profane but sin. But if we express the inward holiness of all things by trying to make them all alike outwardly holy, we shall succeed only in making them all profane. So true religion is agreed with superstition in making distinctions: the difference is that while superstition invests certain things with various degrees of intrinsic holiness, true religion recognises in them no *special* holiness at all (if such a phrase has any meaning) but respects them as things which it has been found necessary to use in a special way to help men in their service to God.

So meetings at fixed times for worship began at once and of necessity, and were gradually shaped by the needs of the time, for there is no reason to suppose that the Lord himself left any regulations for conducting them. At Jerusalem the first Christians went up to the temple to pray, and elsewhere they frequented the synagogues as long as they were allowed. But they had meetings of their own from the first, and developed the service of the synagogue in a very independent way. They had the same general structure of prayer and thanksgiving, reading, and exhortation. But the prayer seems to have been extempore, with (if we may judge from Clement of Rome) a decided touch of the synagogue prayers and a strong tendency to fall into grooves. They must also have had a distinctively Christian element, emphasized by the very early appearance of Christian hymns. Hymns are nearly always the first literary efforts of infant churches; and the apostolic age was no exception. We find more than traces of them in

the New Testament itself,[1] and our *Gloria in excelsis* is so related to Polycarp's last prayer before the fire was lighted that its earliest form may date from long before 155. The reading would at first be of the Old Testament, much in the Jewish way, unless there was an apostolic letter to be read, or something else that was for edification.[2] But the reading of the New Testament (Gospels as well as Epistles) must have been introduced quite early in the second century. We find the custom well established in Justin's time at Rome, and so widespread in the next generation that we cannot refuse to carry back its origin some distance before the appearance of Marcion. In Greek countries the Scriptures would of course be read in Greek, the Old Testament in the LXX., the New in the original. But translations were soon required. Syriac and Latin versions go back to the second century, Coptic to the third.

Then came the sermon, which must have differed greatly from the Jewish. Our first sample of one after New Testament times is the so-called Second Epistle of Clement, apparently preached at Corinth in the middle of the second century. It is poor stuff, no doubt; but it conforms to the rule that every Christian sermon must be directly or indirectly a preaching of Christ.

After the sermon came the distinctively Christian ordinance of the Lord's Supper. In the New Testament and in the *Teaching*[3] it is the solemn grace

[1] 1 Ti. iii. 16 certainly: Eph. v. 14 probably, whatever its relation to Isa. lx. 1. They must have been conspicuous, to attract Pliny's attention. See also Rendel Harris on *Odes of Solomon* (*Contemporary Rev.* Apr. 1909).

[2] Soter's letter was so read at Corinth 170, and doubtless Clement's in 96. The distinction between edifying and canonical was not sharply drawn for some time.

[3] *Teaching* 10.

which closed an evening meal; but at Rome in Justin's time it had already been separated from the Agapé and transferred to the Sunday morning service.[1] There is no reason to suppose that the change was made by apostolic order. It was probably made by one church after another from obvious motives of prudence, to avoid slanders; and motives of convenience, when worshippers were drawn from a wider area, and some of them had to come in from the country.[2] There was no question of principle in the matter. We find evening communions as late as the fifth century;[3] and even then they are rather noticed as unusual than condemned as wrong.

With this change another may have been connected. In the New Testament and the *Teaching* no distinction seems made among Christians. Even a heathen may come in to the prophesyings,[4] and there are practically no catechumens to be shut out from the Agapé. But with the transfer of the Lord's Supper to the Sunday morning, it assumed more the character of a mystery which none but the baptized might even see; and the increasing delay of baptism gave rise to a definite class of catechumens who were not admitted to the later part of the service. This change also seems to have been gradual, and was not recognized by Marcion.[5]

So far the service was still open to catechumens, to penitents (except a few of the worst) and to

[1] Ignatius *Smyrn.* 7. 8 seems to indicate the evening, while Pliny's account leaves the question open. *Quod ipsum facere desisse* are only the words of the renegades—"and we gave up attendance."

[2] Justin *Apol.* i. 67. These at any rate cannot have come fasting.

[3] Socr. *H.E.* v. 23.

[4] 1 Cor. xiv. 24.

[5] Tert. *Praescr.* 41 where *pariter adeunt* cannot mean that catechumens—much less heathens—were allowed actually to partake.

heathens. The admission of these last sometimes led to conversions; and there was no danger in it, for heathen Rome never used spies in matters of religion.[1] Apart from foul charges, she put down unlawful worships without caring much to know precisely what they were. But from this point onward the rule was that none but "the faithful" might be present. The only exception is that late in the third century we begin to find a higher class of penitents, who were allowed to witness the communion, though not to partake of it. So with this exception, it is always presumed that none is present without partaking of it.

As no extant Liturgy can safely be referred to our period, we are much in ignorance of the exact form of the service. Its outline however is so obvious that it must have been much the same everywhere, while the details varied from church to church. To judge from Irenæus, it centred quite as much on the offertory as on the actual communion. It began with a confession of sins—"that your offering may be pure," says the *Teaching*. In the Roman Mass, which contains fragments known to be of extreme antiquity by their utter contradiction of later Roman doctrine, the priest confesses first to the people and is absolved by them;[2] then they confess to him, and are absolved by him in the same form of words. This may very well have been the original practice. Then the exhortation to forgive each other, and the kiss of peace. The president (before long the bishop) stood at the far

[1] Tert. *Apol.* 7, *de Fuga*, 12 *Scap.* 5 hardly prove the use of spies by the Government.

[2] More precisely, by one of the attendants in their name. All in a low voice, so that it is hardly noticed.

side of the table, facing the people across it, as the pope still does when he says mass at his own cathedral of St. John Lateran. The earliest churches, in the third and fourth centuries, were modelled on the Roman *basilicas*. They were square buildings, with an apse at the end. The holy table was on the chord of the apse, and the bishop sat in the centre of the curve, with his elders on each side of him, exactly like the Roman governor and his assessors.

Then the offerings of the people, mostly in kind, for money grew scarcer as the Empire declined, were presented at the holy table in solemn thankfulness for God's one great gift of life, in this world and the other. From these offerings was taken bread and wine, and brought to the president. They were the bread and wine of common life, such as was usual to be eaten and drunk, so that the bread would seem to have been leavened, and the wine (as Justin expressly tells us) was mixed with water. Then the *Sursum corda*, followed by the general prayer of praise and thanksgiving, the special thanksgiving over the elements, the *Epiclesis* or Invocation of the Holy Spirit, and the Amen of the people. Whether the Words of Institution were always recited is not quite certain. Then came the great prayer for all men—for the congregation, for the dead, and for the givers of the offerings—roughly answering to our Prayer for the Church Militant—ending with the Lord's Prayer. It seems to have been still extempore in Justin's time.[1] The communion of the people followed at once, and each as he received

[1] Justin *Apol.* i. 67, where ὅση δύναμις cannot well mean "at the top of his voice."

the bread and wine answered, Amen. At Rome in Justin's time portions were afterwards taken by the deacons to the absent members of the church. These must have been a numerous class, for there were many hindrances in those days; but how far the practice was general, is more than we can say.

The service was originally conducted by an apostle or prophet if present, and he would conduct it nearly as he thought fit. He could order a special *Agape* when he pleased, and was not tied to any form of words in giving thanks.[1] But in most cases even in apostolic times the duty would devolve on the local ministry of bishops and deacons; and as in the Lord's Supper some one person of necessity takes the leading part, this may have contributed a good deal to the emergence of the bishop as the one ruler of the church.

The meetings were at first held in private houses. Very humble Christians might be able to lend a room; and if a person of some rank was converted with the whole *familia*, as sometimes happened, that household would be a centre for all the Christians within reach. Thus we hear of upper rooms at Jerusalem and Troas, of the church which is in the house of Priscilla and Aquila, and of the household of Onesiphorus. A city even of moderate size might contain several small churches meeting in several houses. Such a state of things no doubt contributed a good deal to the disorder of the subapostolic age. Ignatius was a practical man when he insisted on making all these small churches subject to the one bishop of the city. But this meant larger congregations than private rooms could always contain, so

[1] *Teaching* 10: also the προεστώς of Justin.

that special rooms began to be needed, which could be fitted up for the purpose. If any of these were built before the end of the second century, they must have remained in real or nominal private ownership; but the edict of Severus enabled the churches to hold property. But they cannot have been very common in Tertullian's time—at any rate, the attentions of hostile mobs were directed to the burial-places, not to the churches. The first clear mention of churches we shall find in the reign of Severus Alexander; there were sundry to be restored after the persecution of Valerian, and in the Long Peace (260-303) they attained something like magnificence.

But only the outside was magnificent: the inside was plain and unadorned. The Christians had good reason for their distrust of art, on account of its close connexion with idolatry. It was not dislike of art in itself, for they had a little art of their own in the catacombs. These they adorned with frescoes and paintings, not of biblical stories and Christian symbols only, but of animals and plants without regard to their mythological signification. But there were no images in the churches—none are found in the inventories taken at the outbreak of the last persecution in Africa—and paintings appear only at the extreme end of our period, and then only to be condemned by the Council of Elvira, "that what is worshipped and adored be not pictured on the walls." Still the old fear of idolatry.

Though there is no recorded command of the Lord for the observance of Sunday, we find it settled from the first as the usual day for common worship.[1]

[1] 1 Cor. xvi. 2, Acts xx. 7: not Rev. i. 10 in the day of the Lord (Hort). The appearances of the risen Lord (Joh. xx. 26) are significant.

If there were some attempts to keep the sabbath also, making it a day of rest, the practice was soon condemned as a piece of Judaizing. Sunday was not only not confused with the sabbath, but anxiously distinguished from it. The observance differed both in motive and in character. It commemorated not the seventh day of the creation, but the Saviour's resurrection; and what marked it out was common worship, not sabbatic rest. In fact, we find few signs before the Nicene age that the observance of the day went much further than common worship. Tertullian is the first and I think the only writer of our period who tells us[1] that they put off business on that day, because it ought not to be disturbed with cares, though they could not put off very much in the midst of a heathen world. Constantine's legislation however is good proof that by his time there was a widespread feeling against doing needless worldly business on Sunday.

There was no great observance of other days of the week, though there may have been thinly attended services on some of them, as now. The stricter sort of Christians fasted (or rather half-fasted till 3 P.M.) twice in the week like the stricter sort of Jews, but they would not keep the same days as "the hypocrites."[2] The Jews fasted on Monday and Thursday; they chose Wednesday and Friday for the *dies stationum*, when the Christian soldier stood at

It has often been pointed out that this silent transfer of worship from the sabbath by born Jews can hardly be accounted for but by the overwhelming impression of the resurrection. Similarly the Lord's Supper needs the resurrection to explain its observance. It is hard to see how either the one or the other could have arisen at once, if the horror and infamy of the crucifixion had been the end of all.

[1] *de Oratione* 18.

[2] *Teaching* 7: also Clem. Al. Tert. (freq.) Or.

his post. But fasting generally was rather considered a useful practice than made a matter of law, except by the Montanists. It was naturally taken over from the Jews, though the Lord did not command it, and very likely never practised fasting himself.[1] We find it in the apostolic age and onward, specially connected with prayer on important occasions, like the sending of Barnabas and Saul, or the baptism of a proselyte.[2] Often however it was done rather as a means of raising money for the poor, like the "self-denial weeks" of the Salvation Army.

As was Sunday to the week, so was Easter to the year. Though the *Teaching* mentions no feasts, there can be no doubt that the observance of Easter dates back to apostolic times. In the second century it was led up to by the forty hours' fast in memory of the crucifixion (the only fast as yet commonly observed) and by the vigil of the night before, and itself introduced seven weeks of continuous festival till Pentecost, during which (at least in the third century) it was forbidden to kneel in public worship. But when precisely was the feast to be kept? The Lord's resurrection took place on Sunday, Nisan 16; but in six years out of seven Sunday does not fall on Nisan 16. What was then to be done? In Asia they kept the day of Nisan, whatever might be the day of the week: in the West and in some parts of the East they kept the day of the week, whatever

[1] Mt. vi. 16 is not a command to fast, but a warning against a show of dirty faces when they do fast. It must not be made to contradict the explicit teaching of Mt. ix. that no man may be compelled to fast.

It cannot be proved that the fasting of the forty days was more than the involuntary hardship of life in the desert. The words ἐνήστευσεν proves no more than in Mk. viii. 3, 2 Cor. xi. 27, and St Mark's account (ἦν μετὰ τῶν θηρίων) points rather to hardship than to religious observance.

[2] Acts xiii. 2. *Teaching* 7, Justin *Apol.* i. 61, Tert. *de Bapt.* 20.

might be the day of Nisan. Moreover, in Asia the observance culminated in the paschal Communion of Nisan 14, while in the West the most solemn part of it was the festal Communion on the Sunday morning.

When Polycarp came to Rome *cir.* 155, he discussed the matter with bishop Anicetus, and came to no agreement with him. But the discussion must have been quite friendly, for Anicetus allowed him to preside in his own place in the Lord's Supper. A few years after this the Quartodecimans, as they were called, came to a dispute among themselves over the meaning of the Communion on Nisan 14. Most of them claimed St. John's authority for placing the crucifixion Nisan 15, and looked on the Communion of the night before as a continuation of the Jewish Passover, while Claudius Apollinaris gave it a more decided Christian character.

The controversy became acute somewhere about 191, in the time of the Roman bishop Victor. Councils were held in Palestine under Theophilus of Cæsarea and Narcissus of Jerusalem, at Rome under Victor himself, in Pontus under the senior bishop, Palmas of Amastris, in Gaul under the guidance of Irenæus, in Osrhoene, one held by Bacchylus of Corinth—and there were others. These all declared that they would observe the Resurrection on the Sunday, and that they would continue the fast till then. Alexandria went the same way: only Asia resisted. So far Victor had found general support; but when he went on to break off communion with the churches of Asia as heterodox, and wrote letters denouncing them to the churches as excommunicate, he was generally blamed for turning

a matter of custom into a question of faith, summarily settling it by the Roman use, and requiring other churches to do as he had done. Irenæus in particular had actively supported him on the question of practice, and had written περὶ σχίσματος against Blastus, the Quartodeciman zealot who had stirred up the trouble at Rome. But now he mediated in the interest of peace, appealing to the practice of Victor's own predecessors in proof that these and other differences of custom need not be any hindrance to Christian unity.

From Polycrates of Ephesus Victor received a defiant answer on behalf of Asia. "Not of self-will do we keep the day, adding nothing and taking nothing away. For indeed in Asia sleep mighty spirits,[1] which shall rise again in the day of the Lord's presence, when he shall come with glory from heaven and raise up all the saints—Philip, one of the twelve apostles, who sleeps in Hierapolis, and two of his daughters who grew old in virginity, and his other daughter who lived in the Holy Spirit, who rests in Ephesus. And moreover there was John who leaned on the Lord's breast, who became a priest wearing the breastplate, and martyr and teacher—he sleeps at Ephesus — and Polycarp too in Smyrna bishop and martyr, and Thraseas bishop and martyr of Eumenea, who sleeps in Smyrna. Why need I tell of Sagaris bishop and martyr who sleeps in Laodicea and the blessed Papirius also, and Melito the eunuch, who lived in the Holy Spirit in all things, who lies in Sardis waiting for the visitation from heaven, in which he shall rise again? All these

[1] With some hesitation I take the obscure word στοιχεῖα in its modern Greek sense. Dr. J. H. Moulton (by letter) seems disposed to think it admissible.

kept the fourteenth day, the day of the Passover, according to the Gospel, transgressing it in nothing but walking according to the rule of faith; and so do I Polycrates, who am less than any of you, according to the tradition of my kinsmen, some of whom indeed I myself succeeded. Seven of my kinsmen were bishops, and I am the eighth, and my kinsmen always kept the day when God's people put away the leaven. I then, brethren, who have lived sixty years in the Lord, and conversed with brethren from all parts of the world, and gone through every passage of Scripture—I am not dismayed by your threats, for they that are greater than I have said, We must obey God rather than men." [1]

It is a noble protest and a stately roll of names: and yet Polycrates was wrong. He was right indeed on the immediate question of rebuking Victor's insolence and want of charity: but the Easter Question itself was not over trifles, and on this it must be admitted that Anicetus and Victor shewed a truer Christian perception than Polycarp and Polycrates. In the yearly festival as well as in the weekly, it was right and good that Christianity should sooner or later assert its independence of Judaism.

Before the Nicene age the Roman rule was generally, though not yet universally accepted. This fixed Easter on the Sunday after the full moon following the vernal equinox. But even this involved astronomical difficulties. At Rome Mar. 18 was the vernal equinox, at Alexandria Mar. 21; and the cycles for finding the full moon were defective. Hippolytus had one of 56 years, which soon went wrong; and it was not till the sixth century that

[1] Eus. v. 24.

our present cycle of 532 years was introduced. Meanwhile they could think of nothing better than to let the bishop of Alexandria for Egypt and the bishop of Rome in the West give annual notice of the day to be kept. The Roman notices are only mentioned as an old custom by the Council of Arles in 314; but the Alexandrian were pastoral letters, and often documents of great historical value. Eusebius gets a good deal of his information about bishop Dionysius from his Paschal Letters, and those of Athanasius in the next century tell us a good deal of the history of the time.

The Christian Year was not yet much further developed. In the East we find the Epiphany—(first among the Basilidians) which commemorated the Incarnation in general, with secondary references to the Baptism and Nativity. The Westerns, though not till the next century, had Christmas (first in the Chronographer of 354) which replaced the *Brumalia* and the Birthday of Mithras on Dec. 25, and commemorated the Nativity only. The difference from the Epiphany is that of the historical from the mystic standpoint. So the Epiphany was continued in the West only as a minor festival, while Christmas met with a good deal of opposition in the East, which has not even yet been quite overcome. It was still denounced as a wicked innovation in the Russia of Alexis Michaelovitch (1645-1678) and even now the chief services of the day commemorate Napoleon's retreat from Moscow.

There were also the "Birthdays" on which the martyrs entered into everlasting life. These were kept at their tombs with prayers, offerings, and the Lord's Supper. They were still only commemorations,

though they paved the way for many abuses and superstitions in the next age.

Now what was the general relation of the early Christian churches in doctrine and institutions to the world around them? It was one of strong contrast and originality. Of course likenesses in abundance may be pointed out everywhere. The philosophical questions which underlie all religion must be dealt with by every religion which perceives them, the craving of human nature for communion with the divine will produce habits of prayer and legends of theophany all over the world, and the deep instinct of symbolism may shew itself anywhere in similarities of worship and sacraments. Thus Islam divides like Christendom round the camps of tradition, reason, mysticism. India debates as anxiously as we do whether salvation is by faith, or works, or knowledge, and reproduces the whole controversy between Augustine and Pelagius in the dispute between the "cat" school and the "monkey" school.[1] So too there are forms of worship at the ends of the earth, and feasts of communion come down from the dawn of history. Christianity is like the rest, yet markedly unlike them, even where it most resembles them. We have in sundry regions tales of gods coming down among men, living on earth, born of women, slain by evil powers, but nowhere anything like the Christian belief in the one Son of God taking human nature on him for evermore. That belief may be despised as

[1] Grierson *J. R. Asiatic Soc.* Apr. 1908 p. 338. The question between them is, Does the divine power carry the soul as the cat carries her kitten, without the kitten having a choice in the matter; or is there a better simile in the young monkey, which clings to its mother?

The whole question of grace and freewill could hardly be better put.

mystic or set aside as false; but it is undeniably the faith in which the Christians lived from the first. And it transfigured everything. Baptism and the Supper and the church may be adapted from Judaism; but it is as certain as any historical fact can be that they were instituted by the Lord himself, not copied vaguely from the heathen world by the second generation of Christians. This later theory does worse than set aside some exceptionally strong historical evidence, for the whole trend of early Christian thought must be fundamentally mistaken before it can be supposed that the table of the Lord was copied from "the table of devils." Besides, if all the organization was invented by the second generation, what was there in the first? So everything was markedly different from heathen or even Jewish parallels. Baptism was not simply an initiation, or even a cleansing from sin, but a new birth "into Christ," the Supper of the Lord was not simply a communion with a god, but the solemn thanksgiving of men that were "in Christ"; and the church itself was not simply an association where hymns were sung to Christ as a god, but the visible expression of a life "in Christ." If we forget the inward working of this "mystic" faith, our result will be quite unlike anything that was known as Christian in early times.

Of course the Christians were not repelled by the mere fact that heathens said or did a thing, but by the contamination of idolatry. Where there was no risk of that, they had sense enough to do as their neighbours did. There might be dangers, but there was nothing essentially unchristian when Christian doctrine was expressed in the current language of Greek philosophy or Roman law, when the sacraments

were described in the terms of the mysteries, or when the organization of the church was modelled on that of the state. Danger began only when heathen words were used not simply to express Christian conceptions, but to determine and to limit them; and though there was always something of this, it did not become serious before the third and fourth centuries. Then indeed a more miscellaneous church began to make the change from Christian ideas in heathen language to heathen ideas in Christian language. On the Person of Christ indeed the Eastern councils kept firmly within the sense of Scripture: but other doctrines fared worse. Cyprian's conception of the Christian ministry differs entirely from St. Paul's, and Chrysostom's idea of priesthood is the same as Julian's. The assimilation of Christianity to heathenism from the third century is matter of history, and we need not here enquire how far it was due to borrowing on one or both sides, or how far it was a similar growth of the religion of the natural man. The one thing certain is that however historically unavoidable it might be, it was in most respects rather a reversal of Christ's plain teaching than a development of principles laid down by him.

This may be the place for one more reminder that even as Christian life was at no time the same all over the Empire, so neither did it remain in any one place the same from one generation to another. Beneath the local colouring which varied from province to province, and from city to city, profound changes of general form and spirit were going on, which in the time between the apostolic age and the Nicene amounted almost to a revolution. To begin with, the environment of the churches was greatly

changed. The world had gone a long way downhill since the Augustan age, receiving strong and subtle influences from the struggle with the barbarians, the great pestilences, the decay of trade, the disorder of the currency, the growth of the barbarian element in the Empire and its reorganization on Eastern lines by Diocletian. Its temper was wholly changed. If heathenism had been in difficulties since Plato's time, it had now come to its last shifts. The old gods were really dead or nearly so by the end of the third century, and the worship of the emperor had lost its reality in the military anarchy, so that Eclecticism was plainly the last possible rival to Christianity. If Mithras failed, Jupiter was past revival; and if Neoplatonism did not answer, they could not go back to Stoicism.

The churches themselves had changed even more. In the apostolic age there might be a few scattered converts in a city, meeting in separate groups for a simple worship at the houses of some of their chief men. In the course of the second century the different congregations of a city were brought under the control of a bishop; and more and more power fell into the bishop's hands as the laity increased in number, till the persecution of Diocletian found the Empire overspread by a vast confederation of strongly organized churches assembling for elaborate services, often in splendid buildings with overflowing congregations. The church underwent something of the same change as the state, and with something like the same result. As the more complicated administration of the Empire impressed itself on the life of the world, so the fuller organization of the visible church loomed larger in Christian life. The change was natural and

necessary, for with their increasing numbers the churches needed all the strength which organization could give them: yet it could not fail more or less to throw into the background the spiritual unity of the church in its living Head, and to push forward a secular unity of the church as the one visible institution which dispensed the means of salvation.

The temper of the Christians was also changed. They were no longer a scanty band of converts with all the world against them, but a great party in the state which might seem well on the way to victory when it was rudely awakened by the persecution of Diocletian. It still made converts, and worthy converts too; but the fashionable proselytes and the "traffickers on Christ" were more in number, and therefore more openly given to heathen living and heathen ways of thinking, and better able to influence Christian living and Christian ways of thinking. So the churches received an increasing class of men whose general ideas of religion were essentially heathen; and this class took in Christians of all sorts, from martyrs like Cyprian down to the hangers-on who were frightened away by the first rumours of persecution.

Meanwhile no men were prouder of their Christian privilege than those who looked on the church as a society of the heathen sort. Christian worship had from the first some real likeness to the heathen mysteries. Those belonged to private societies, often of bad character, which received indeed all comers to their esoteric teaching, but received none without initiation, and not only admitted no strangers to their rites, but made the very nature of them a secret to outsiders. The churches too were private societies

with a very bad character in the world, which received indeed all comers to their teaching, but received none without baptism, and admitted no strangers to the Lord's Supper, though they made no secret of its nature to outsiders. Why not complete the likeness? Was not the knowledge of the truth a high privilege? Were they not casting pearls before swine[1] by giving it to all comers? Ought it not to be reserved as esoteric teaching for those worthy to receive it? Then Baptism would become the initiation, and admission to it would have to be fenced with long preparation, while the Lord's Supper would be the mystery, and the knowledge of its ceremonial the highest privilege of the "faithful," so that it must be kept secret from the profane. This sounded well, and might seem no more than reasonable care not to give advanced teaching to beginners who could not profit by it. Yet it sprang from the natural man's belief that truth is not a heavenly ideal, but a private possession of his own. It made its division of elementary and advanced teaching on a false principle, and presumed on the knowledge of truth to set the "faithful" over against the catechumens, and the Christians generally over against the "profane," as a class of favourites of heaven.

There is no trace of this "reserve" or *disciplina arcani* in the writers of the New Testament, who never shun to declare unto us the whole counsel of God. We do not find it either in the subapostolic Fathers; and Justin has no hesitation in fully describing the observance of the Lord's Supper in writing to the heathen emperor. Yet he tells us that Baptism was already called φωτισμός (illumination)—

[1] Mt. vii. 6 was a favourite argument for the *disciplina arcani*.

the technical term for initiation in the mysteries.[1] Clement speaks of Christianity as a mystery, and uses freely the language of the mysteries in the invitation to the heathen which is the peroration of his *Protrepticus*. In the *Stromateis* the influence of the mysteries is less conspicuous, for he compares the more advanced teaching of Christianity rather to the esoteric doctrine of the philosophers than to the guarded secrets of the mysteries. They are the privilege of the enlightened Christian, not conferred on him by Baptism, but needing to be won afterwards by greater purity and more strenuous effort than that of common men. In later writers the influence of the mysteries is greater, especially in the fourth century, and it is greatest in the sixth century writings which bear the name of Dionysius the Areopagite.

In the West it was not so strong: but the growing tendency of Christians to look on themselves as favourites of heaven took another form. The emphasis was laid less on the doctrine taught, and more on the church which taught it, and the privilege of knowing truth was overshadowed by the belief that the visible church was the one escape from the fire of hell. So though the *disciplina arcani* was maintained for some time, the special habit of viewing the Gospel as a mystery was soon merged in the general doctrine that there is no salvation outside the visible church.

The growth then of the belief that Christians are favourites of heaven in the same sense as the Jews had supposed themselves to be, may be taken as the most far-reaching change which affected Christian life

[1] There is no need to take φωτισθέντες in this technical sense in Hebr. vi.

within our period. We may now return to some general observations.

Upon the whole, the better sort of Christian life, especially in the East, seems to have been much more cheerful than in later ages. We must not summarily judge of common life by the high-strung ecstasy of martyrs, though that too is often significant. Some of them do not seem likely to have been amiable in common life: but such high self-control and courtesy as we see in Polycarp tells us another tale of the past. There was struggle in that age, there was failure, there was sadness; but we cannot mistake the note of thankfulness and joy that runs through its literature from the *Gloria in excelsis* and the *Protrepticus* of Clement downward. There was more shadow in the Latin West, where the spirit of legalism was stronger; yet even here there was not much morbid joy in suffering and tales of suffering. The common symbols of devotion pointed to hope, like the palm, the dove with the olive branch, the phœnix, the ΑΩ, and the ΙΧΘΥΣ, though there is a more sombre touch in the ship sailing hence and the Τ (cross). But the cross was no more than a sign, though the use of it was not free from superstition. It was not pictured or set up in houses; and crucifixes belong to much later times. The stories of the martyrs are commonly told with quiet dignity, and the scenes are hardly ever pictured. The chief exception is the mosaic of Perpetua trampling down the dragon in her dream. The inscriptions in the catacombs are cheerful all through the years of persecution: not till the times of suffering have passed away do words of Christian hope and joy give place to conventional and heathen

phrases of lamentation. This was only natural. The trials of persecution may sadden life, but they need not sour it like asceticism. There is one cry in the, How long, O Lord? of the persecuted; quite another in the ascetic's, I knew that thou wert a hard man.

Once more, how did the Christians face their persecutors? How far did their sufferings make them bitter to their neighbours or disloyal to the state? In many cases no doubt heathen injustice was fiercely resented. Tertullian as usual is no model of meekness. His *de Spectaculis* ends with a lurid picture of heathen society from the deified emperors downward rolling in the fires of hell. Even worse is the savage partizanship of Lactantius in his *de mortibus persecutorum*. He twists every act of "the evil beasts" into wicked folly, and gloats over their deaths with demoniac pleasure. But Tertullian and Lactantius are not without the excuse of righteous indignation against atrocious cruelty. They are not liars, and their invectives are exceptional. A few years later Tertullian himself remonstrates calmly with the proconsul Scapula for burning the Christians instead of beheading them like other governors. The truest utterance of Christian feeling is not to be found in the Apologies addressed to heathens, which may be supposed to disguise resentment, but in the dignified silence of Clement of Rome, or in the calm narrative of the churches of Lyons and Vienne. Even the *Martyrium Polycarpi*, though it glows throughout with such emotion that it has often been set aside as a *Tendenzschrift*, is almost as free from railing as the Gospels themselves. Above all, there is no word of bitterness in the catacombs. There is sorrow, there is

hope, but never a curse for the persecutors. The martyr "rests in peace"; and his cause is with his God. As regards the emperors in particular, Christian loyalty was not a vain boast. The professions of apologists might perhaps be made for an occasion; but we cannot mistake the nervous anxiety of Christians to throw the blame of persecution on subordinates, to make the most of such crumbs of favour or even such relaxations of persecutions as they got, and to claim as a friend every emperor who was not utterly hostile. They could look through the vileness of Domitian or the hatred of Marcus to the power ordained of God. The emperor was more holy to the Christians who could scarcely believe in his enmity than to the heathens who worshipped him as a God on earth. The foundations of the Holy Roman Empire were already laid.

Books

On heathen Society—Aust *Religion der Römer* Münster i. W. 1899; Boissier *La Religion romaine*; Dill *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*; Friedländer *Sittengeschichte*; Réville *La Religion romaine sous les Sévères.*—Fustel de Coulanges *La Gaule romaine*; Wallon *L'Histoire de l'esclavage*; Zahn *Skizzen* (on slavery etc.) Erlangen 1898; The latest work is Buckland *Slavery in the Roman Empire*; Dobschutz *Die urchristl. Gemeinden*; Bigg *The Church's Task in the Roman Empire*; Glover *Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire* (publ. too late to be used); On Christian worship Wieland *Mensa und Confessio* München 1906.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CHURCHES AND THE CHURCH

Granted that the ancient world needed a searching reform, there can be no question that the Gospel began at the right end, with the individual and the family. Saints may live in a rotten state, but the state cannot be sound if private life is rotten. No other plan was consistent with the transcendent value of the men for whom Christ died. The revelation was neither a philosophical nor a political idea, nor a system of theology or law, but a living Person, whose life individual after individual was to make his own, and pass on to others, so that any direct attempt at social or political reform would have been inconsistent with its first principles. "Thyself keep pure": the rest would come of itself in course of time from the action of those who strove to purify themselves even as He is pure.

But the Christians were not therefore a pack of Cynics, every one intent on saving his own soul without regard to his neighbour. The new life was a common life in Christ, and therefore social, so that it soon formed institutions. These were at first elastic and provisional, as became men who might any day see their Lord's return; and they only hardened into definite forms as that hope grew fainter. Freemen of

heaven could not be more than pilgrims and sojourners on earth. It was the new life, the common life in Christ, which gathered individuals into churches, and pointed forward to the spiritual unity of a universal church, though it was not purely spiritual motives which gathered the churches into a great worldly corporation modelled on the lines of the imperial administration, and confronting it on equal terms. Let us now see what were the forces which brought together Christians of all ranks and races, and formed within the state a power which no persecutions could overcome.

First, there was the bond of a common life. Even in worldly forms, a common life is a strong bond, and a common life in Christ is the strongest bond of all for those that are conscious of it. And that bond was at its strongest in times when Christians were made, not born. With all allowance for natural increase, the churches must have consisted largely of converts, of men and women who claimed to have themselves received the gift of life in riper years: and so long as there was any fear of persecution, that claim was not often lightly made. Upon the whole, a vivid consciousness of life, and therefore of common life, would seem to have been more widely spread than in any great church of later times; and there were no special conditions of isolation like those of the feudal castles to counteract its social tendency. Even the strong class feeling of Roman society checked it very little, for all classes met together in the churches from the first on terms of spiritual equality, because they all understood that the new life came down to them from a region far above the class distinctions of the world.

The common life rested not on the Unity of God, nor even on his Fatherhood, but on faith in Christ as the incarnate Son who died for men. This holds strictly for the first two centuries: only in the third we begin to find the colourless monotheistic Christianity so common in the fourth. Even those sects which did not fully recognize Christ in this way, and therefore cannot be counted fully Christian, still found in Jesus of Nazareth the guide of life and the centre of the world's history, and therefore more or less fully shared the common life of Christendom. The heretics had their martyrs, and (a few extremes excepted) all felt one as against heathenism.

The Old Testament was the Bible of the apostolic age: but the words of the Lord and the facts of his life were the authoritative declaration of its meaning. "The Gospel," which was the final standard of Christian teaching, was the story of that which the Lord had said and done from the baptism of John till the day when he was taken up from us: and this was diligently taught in the Eastern way by the first generation of evangelists. The master gives out a story—in our time a Sura of the Koran—and repeats it till the scholars have thoroughly learned it before going on to another. Hence the tradition of the apostolic age was not the loose report it is so commonly taken for, but a pretty definite list of selected stories taught as near as might be in fixed words, so that there is no reason to suppose that they underwent any serious change in the course of the apostolic age. Thus Irenæus tells us that the stories he heard from Polycarp were "altogether in accordance with the

scriptures," by which Irenæus would mean the written Gospels. Presently the more or less unsatisfactory notes taken by individuals were superseded by the more accurate collections of our first three Gospels,[1] and these again were followed by sundry apocryphal gospels. Some of the latter, like the Gospel of Peter, seem to have told much the same story as the Three, but less soberly, and with the addition of docetic or ascetic embellishments which plainly shew their later date and secondary character. Others, like the Gospel of the Infancy, are pure and simple novels, and may not have been meant for anything more.

However, it was not long before the three Synoptists, with the addition of St. John's Gospel, were fully recognized as the authoritative Four. The process was doubtless gradual; but it must have been completed some time well before the middle of the second century. Clement, Ignatius and Polycarp have coincidences with sayings of the Lord recorded in our Gospels, and certainly accepted the substance of the Synoptic narrative. A creed considerably fuller than the Apostles' Creed might be drawn up from their allusions.[2] But whether they got it from books or from the traditional teaching is another question, on which no sober critic will care to speak with certainty. Nor can we be sure that the saying, Many are called, but few are chosen, which Barnabas

[1] Of course the "Oral Gospel" theory is not the one sufficient key to the complicated problem of the Synoptic Gospels: but it stands for the plain fact that systematized oral teaching is an important factor in the case. Knowing what we do of Eastern ways of thinking, and of Christian methods traceable in St. Paul's Epistles, we may safely consign to the limbo of vanity all the literary criticism which attempts to solve the problem by combinations of written sources only.

[2] As by Westcott *Canon* 52.

introduces with, As it is written,[1] is quoted from St. Matthew's Gospel, though it seems more likely than not. Papias however, who was a disciple of the Lord's disciple John (whether that John be the apostle or another) and wrote his Commentary on Dominical Oracles[2] about 140, had books before him, and shews clear traces of our first, second and fourth Gospels: and we cannot demand to see his Canon complete in the scanty fragments remaining to us. Justin Martyr certainly used our first and third Gospels, though distinctive traces of the second are naturally less clear. Nor does there seem to be any reasonable doubt that he fully recognized the fourth; and in any case the question is practically settled for him by the Diatessaron of his disciple Tatian, which is a harmony of our Four Gospels and no others. Some time later, Irenæus[3] is as certain that there are four Gospels (confessedly our Four) and no more as that there are four winds of heaven and no more. And what is an axiom to Irenæus cannot be an erratic belief of his own. It must reflect the teaching of his master Polycarp, and the general teaching of the churches for a long time before the date of writing.

The Epistles obtained a canonical position even earlier than the Gospels. They were read from the first in public meetings like the Old Testament; and Clement already not only quotes St. Paul as authoritative, but models his thoughts and language on St.

[1] Barnabas *Ep.* 4. Cf. Mt. xxii. 14.

[2] λογίων κυριακῶν ἐξήγησις (εις) not τῶν λόγων τοῦ κυρίου διήγησις—a commentary, not a narrative, dealing not simply with words spoken by the Lord, but with Scriptures concerning him. λόγια Scriptures as Rom. iii. 2, 1 Pet. iv. 11.

[3] It is safer to leave in abeyance the still earlier traces of four acknowledged Gospels pointed out in Hermas by Dr. C. Taylor.

Paul's in a way which shews his perfect familiarity with the apostle's words. Before the last quarter of the second century the main lines of our Canon were fixed. The four Gospels, the Acts, thirteen Epistles of St. Paul, one each of Peter and John, and the Apocalypse were accepted by all but Marcion and a very few extreme men. The Epistle to the Hebrews was often rejected, especially in the West, as of doubtful authorship; and in the third century the Apocalypse fell into the same condition in the East, and for the same reason. The other five Epistles were more or less admitted, but scarcely received full recognition till the fourth century. Other books hardly obtained even a doubtful recognition. Clement indeed was publicly read like St. Paul; but nobody ever quotes him as authoritative like St. Paul. Claims advanced on behalf of other books, like Barnabas, Hermas, the *Teaching*, or the Gospel according to the Hebrews, are not very serious. They might be read for instruction, and quotations from them might be used as garnish; but I do not think any serious argument is ever rested on them as on the canonical books.

As soon as the churches had a New Testament to set alongside of the Old, the two together became the authoritative standard of Christian teaching, and the only such standard. For the common routine church custom or tradition might be sufficient: but such tradition was subject to the commands of the Lord, and had to be defended by them if disputed, checked by them if doubtful: and when once the elders had passed away, the commands of the Lord could only be known from the written word. If Scripture and tradition were not formally arrayed

against each other as in the age of the Reformation, the reason is that nobody yet supposed tradition to be independent of Scripture in the sense of being entitled to revise, or upon occasion to reverse, the commands of Christ.

But if Scripture is the storehouse of doctrine, it is a very bad manual. The need of short summaries was felt long before there was a Canon formed. The candidate for baptism required instruction before he could profess his belief in the Trinity; and it was evident that such instruction was most conveniently based on some form short enough to be remembered. Though it was needful to teach one by one the stories of the Saviour's life and works, it was not enough to do so without also summing up the main facts; and the summaries (or rules of faith) drawn up in their own words by individual teachers had no official character. So in many churches the Baptismal Formula was variously expanded for catechetical use into a summary about the length of our so-called Apostles' and Nicene Creeds. Every church seems to have done this in its own way, no doubt often following the example of some other church, but still following independently. Ultimately these catechetical creeds were made the Baptismal Professions; but though the change may have been early in the West, it was not made in the East till the Nicene age was well advanced.

These creeds are all much alike, because they all fill out the Baptismal Formula[1] chiefly with the main historic facts of our Saviour's life. A skeleton creed formed by striking out everything ever deliberately omitted from a creed might run thus:—

[1] The *Quicunque* is not properly a creed, but "a sermon on the Creed."

"I believe in God the Father Almighty: And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered, rose again the third day, ascended into heaven, and shall come to judge the quick and the dead: And in the Holy Spirit." The exact wording of these clauses varied a little, and every creed contained something more than this: but these doctrines were always presented as the irreducible minimum, and therefore as the unalterable standard, of Christian belief. These, says Irenæus, are the doctrines which the churches with one accord preached everywhere as handed down to them by the unbroken succession of elders coming down from the apostles; and all teaching opposed to these is inadmissible for Christian men.

Whether such a skeleton creed ever had a real existence must be left in doubt. It is so obvious a summary of the Gospel that apparent allusions to it must be traced with caution. There are certainly none in the New Testament.[1] Eastern creeds commonly contained controversial clauses, chiefly aimed at the Gnostics, like the belief in *one* God, and in *one* Lord Jesus Christ, the creation of heaven and earth, and the life everlasting. Western creeds never had matter of this kind, for the clause, Maker of heaven and earth, is late. The so-called Apostles' Creed cannot be traced with positive certainty beyond 340, when it was presented by Marcellus of Ancyra to Julius of Rome as his own confession. As it is essentially a Western creed, it can hardly be the work of Marcellus himself. Upon the whole, it rather seems

[1] There are none in Rom. vi. 17 (the type of doctrine to which you were committed) or 2 Tim. i. 13 (have an outline of the sound words). Timothy is not told to keep an existing creed, but to make an outline for himself.

to be the Roman creed—which helps to account for the prevalance of similar forms in the West. In this case it may be very old indeed. Harnack places it 140-150, while others bring it back to the very edge of the apostolic age, before the rise of Gnosticism, and some[1] trace it to a Greek original brought from Asia to Rome. Apostolic authorship is of course out of the question; but no better summary could have been made of apostolic teaching.

In this way a ready test of new teaching was established by the time of Irenæus. Was it consistent with the outlines which summed up the main facts of the historic Gospel? If so, it might be true or false, but at all events it was not disloyal to Christ. If not, it must be forbidden in the churches. This was only reasonable, so long as tradition was limited to those historic facts which cannot be made open questions without entirely changing the message of the Gospel. It became another thing when tradition was used to stereotype a vast variety of beliefs and practices for which no better reason can be given than that they became prevalent in later times.

But given the test of doctrine, how was it to be applied in practice? To answer this question, we must return to the growth of church government.

We have to trace the growth of church government after the Apostolic age, using the evidence of later writers and taking up the questions we adjourned.

The great change we see before us is the disappearance of the ministry of gifts, designated by the Holy Spirit for the service of the church in general, and the permanent organization of a ministry of office, appointed by men for the service of particular

[1] *e.g.* Caspari *Th.L.Z.* 1876 p. 11.

churches. We see the beginnings of the change in the Apostolic age: its completion was the work of the next two generations. Apostles died away by the end of the first century, and the last of the old prophets would seem to have been Quadratus and Ammia at Philadelphia in Hadrian's time. False apostles might still wander among the churches, and individual preachers like Hermas might still claim a prophet's rank; but the ministry of gifts was at an end. The ministry of office was in active working from the first, and rapidly became the only ministry. The further the Gospel spread, the fewer must have been the visits of apostles and prophets to particular churches; and however respectfully these survivors of the past might be received and listened to, their practical influence must have rapidly declined as compared with that of the local ministers who were always on the spot, so that no serious change was felt when their visits ceased entirely. The great transition was made insensibly.

The practical advantages of episcopacy in early times are manifest. I have seen indeed a cynical argument that so great a failure admits of no defence but a divine command, which must be presumed if it is not recorded. But it probably worked much better than any other form of government would have done. Strength was its first advantage. Strife and division, such as we see at Corinth, were threatening to throw the subapostolic churches into anarchy; and though there was no lack of strife and division in later times, the bishop was commonly a strong moderating power. Episcopacy was also the best defence against enemies, and indeed had to be strengthened as the contest with the Empire came to

its crisis. A papacy would have been, not only a complete anachronism, but a much weaker government. The arrest of the pope might paralyse all the churches, whereas that of a bishop need not disturb the next city. Even so, the disorders caused by persecution were bad enough.

A second advantage of episcopacy is its conservatism—a quality perhaps of more importance in the church, which has to bear a definite witness, than in the state. And this again has an inside and an outside aspect. Now that the bishop took the lead in administration and in public worship, he held officially something of the position which the apostles had held in virtue of their calling; and as the official guardian of doctrine he was counted as their successor in spite of the essential difference of his work from theirs. Here again episcopacy was stronger than a papacy would have been, for bishops could check each other's teaching, whereas a pope is one man who can have no special inerrancy without some sort of personal inspiration. Again, the bishop's public responsibility for order and sound teaching generally inclined him to moderation, good sense, and compromise. If in this period they were not commonly great thinkers,[1] they still more seldom led their flocks into great mistakes. All through history, indeed, the bishops have generally set their faces against excess on all sides. Even in the later middle ages, they could never be made to work the Inquisition to the satisfaction of the zealots.

[1] Melito, Irenæus, the Dionysii and Cyprian are much outweighed as thinkers by nearly the whole of the rest of the literature.

It is worth note that while the papacy can shew men of the highest eminence in all other directions—statesmen, saints, canonists, and preachers—it has never had a great thinker like Anselm or Bradwardine.

In its more public aspect, episcopacy bore the same character of practical conservatism. Even more than his presbyters, the bishop needed to have a good report of them which are without. Outsiders like to deal with a responsible person, and that person soon finds the need of being (or making himself) more or less a man of the world. So the bishops commonly strove to maintain friendly relations as far as might be with the world. Ignatius is an exception, for wanton defiance of the Empire seldom came from bishops; and we do not know that even Ignatius was defiant before his condemnation. Nor were they necessarily men of the world in a bad sense. A statesmen like Victor or Cyprian could do a good deal by checking fanaticism on his own side and overcoming prejudice on the other. There was plenty of room for tact and conciliation before things came to the point where the only answer a Christian could make was *Non facio.*

As regards the relations of presbyters and deacons, not much need here be added to what has been said already. No doubt the difference between them was growing in the second century, the presbyters leaning more to the work of government and pastoral care, the deacons to that of administration and care of the poor, which brought them into closer contact with the bishop. But the distinction was not very sharp; and could not be, till the churches grew too large to be manageable, so that some of the higher functions of public worship were (in ordinary cases) resigned by the bishop to the presbyters. In other words, the difference was less marked when presbyters and deacons acted in common subordina-

tion to the bishop of the city than when in later times the deacon was directly subordinated to the presbyter of a single church, and the bishop was only an occasional visitor.

But now we come to the disputed question of the origin of episcopacy, as we may call it for shortness. In strictness we here mean by episcopacy the monarchical government of a single bishop as opposed to the collective government of sundry bishops who are not easily distinguished from presbyters. The first broad fact we notice is that though we found no trace of episcopacy in the New Testament, it is universal a century later. By this time every church has its bishop, and Irenæus can speak of episcopacy as "the ancient system of the church." How is the change to be accounted for? The question, be it noted once for all, is as purely historical as that of the growth of monarchy in England, and no man who cares for truth will attempt to settle it by dogmatic "presuppositions." Any beliefs of later ages, apart from such purely historical evidence as they may contain, are no more to the purpose than the theories of Hanoverian lawyers. True or false, they prove nothing but beliefs of later ages.

The short answer made by some is that the apostles must have given command for every church to have its bishop. If no such command can be found in the New Testament, it must have been given notwithstanding. Some say that if our Lord "spoke of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" for forty days after his Resurrection, he cannot have forgotten to prescribe the government and worship of the church. Be this as it may, the apostles not only ordained episcopacy for the churches

generally, but established it as a binding ordinance for all future ages. These two points, it is important to notice, are historically distinct, and need separate proof, for the apostles must have ordained many things to meet temporary needs. Thus the decisions of the apostolic conference are certainly not binding now. In this case however the second point is fairly clear. If they did give such a command, they must have meant it to endure as long as their reasons for it endured. It would then be a serious question how far modern changes of society would justify a departure from it, though in any case the absence of any record in Scripture is a fact of grave significance.

But as a matter of fact, did they give any such command? There is a good deal to be said for the theory that they did. It explains a whole series of the facts before us, like the early spread of episcopacy in Asia and elsewhere, and the insistence of Ignatius. It gives one reason for the importance attached to the lists or successions of bishops by Hegesippus and Irenæus. It also explains why later ages from Irenæus onward so firmly believed in a divine sanction for episcopacy. So utterly have they forgotten the earlier state of things that they read episcopacy without hesitation into the New Testament, calling James bishop of Jerusalem, Timothy of Ephesus, and so on.[1] Putting together these facts, they seem decisive that episcopacy dates back to apostolic times, and is at any rate not contrary to any apostolic ordinance that was meant to be permanent. Whatever the apostles did, we can be certain that they

[1] Even Irenæus *Haer.* III. xiv. 2 turns the bishops *or* presbyters of Ephesus (Acts xx. 17, 28) into the bishops *and* presbyters of Ephesus *and the neighbouring churches.*

never gave command that the churches were *not* to be ruled by bishops.

But all this falls very far short of proof that episcopacy is itself such an ordinance. The theory accounts for some of the facts, and would be a poor theory if it did not; but it is not needed to account for them, and it is directly contradicted by another series of facts. If apostles did command that every church should have its bishop, then either we shall find a bishop in every church, or else (if fair occasion arise) we shall get some hint that the disobedient churches are doing wrong. Now it is as certain as any historical fact can well be that there was no bishop in the important church of Corinth at the time of Clement's writing. The trouble had arisen from the deposition of certain presbyters—the very question of all others on which the bishop must have had something to say. Yet from beginning to end of a long letter, Clement not only never mentions a bishop or a vacancy in the see, but never gives the faintest hint that the presbyters of Corinth either had or ought to have had any sort or kind of ecclesiastical superiors: and Clement must have known perfectly well whether the apostles set a bishop over the presbyters they appointed at Corinth.[1] Again, though we need not doubt that

[1] Bishop Gore admits that the facts cannot be explained by a vacancy in the see, but finds traces of superior officers in the (plural) ἡγούμενοι or προηγούμενοι of (c. 1, 21) and suggests that Corinth may have been subject to one of the wandering prophets.

His explanation of προηγούμενοι is hazardous as a question of scholarship, and certainly not necessary. The suggestion of a prophet is *pure assumption*, and as such cannot be disproved: but there are two points to notice. (1) So far as we know, there is nothing to connect prophets with the *government* of churches. If a prophet settled down at Corinth, his influence might be very great; but no amount of influence would make him bishop of Corinth. But the decisive point is (2) that the arguments which prove that there was no

Polycarp was bishop of Smyrna, he addresses simply "the church of God which is at Philippi," and in the course of his letter bids them "submit themselves to the presbyters and deacons as to God and Christ."[1] Could he have said this if the presbyters and deacons themselves obeyed a bishop? A still more conspicuous case is not unlikely. It may be true that Clement was bishop of Rome: but we could not have guessed it from his letter. He never speaks himself: it is the church that speaks from first to last. So too, Ignatius is silent for once about the bishop when he is writing to the church of Rome, and there is no trace of a bishop of Rome even in Hermas. We must not press too far an argument from silence: but at the least, the bishop does not stand out at Rome in the way he does at Ephesus or Magnesia.

We come now to Ignatius. Whatever may be the truth of the matter, it must have been familiar to him, so that his evidence ought to be decisive. Some facts indeed it settles summarily. Episcopacy has already got a footing in Asia, in Syria, and elsewhere. He names the bishops of Ephesus, Magnesia and Tralles, calls Polycarp a bishop, and mentions a bishop at Philadelphia. He calls himself a bishop, and speaks of bishops near Antioch, and of bishops at the ends of the earth being in the counsels of Jesus Christ: and these are most likely bishops in our sense of the word. This however is a small part of his evidence. He has the strongest possible conviction that episco-

governing bishop are equally valid to shew that there was no governing prophet either, or any governing authority at all above the presbyters.

This second point (let alone other arguments) is also fatal to the ingenious theory that Corinth was subject to a non-resident bishop, as Virginia before 1775 was subject to the bishop of London.

[1] Pol. *Phil.* 5. It is rather burlesque than argument to say that Polycarp "had far too much respect for the bishop" to treat him with decent civility.

pacy is according to God's will, and expresses that conviction in language forcible to the verge of blasphemy. "We ought to regard the bishop as the Lord himself. It is good to know God and the bishop. He that honoureth the bishop is honoured of God. As many as are of God and of Jesus Christ are with the bishop. It is not lawful to baptize or to hold a love-feast without the bishop. The Spirit preached, saying, Do nothing without the bishop"—and much more to the same effect.[1]

Can language go further? Did even the Carolines of the seventeenth century set the bishop on the throne of God in this way? Ignatius is not a man who measures words; but even he could scarcely have written thus if there had been no apostolic sanction for episcopacy. St. John in particular must have seen its beginnings in Asia, and his opinion would be well known. We can hardly doubt that he gave it some sort of approval; and he may actually have appointed some of the bishops, like Polybius and Polycarp in Tralles and Smyrna. But even so, we have no reason to think that he made it a binding order for all churches. In the first place, Ignatius is attacking separatists, not presbyterians—individuals who disobeyed an existing order, not churches which deliberately preferred another order. After all, nothing he says of episcopacy is different *in kind* from what the apostles say of the Empire: Honour the emperor, The powers that be are ordained of God. As the apostles command obedience to the emperor as the *de facto* ruler of the world, so Ignatius preaches obedience to the bishop as the *de facto* ruler of the church to which he is writing. We cannot take for

[1] Collected by Lightfoot *Ign.* i. 389.

granted that he would have counted the Corinthians rebels against Christ because they had no bishop, though any man might have been inclined to think that a bishop would be the most convenient remedy for their disorders. But there is more than this in Ignatius. Time after time he insists, Obey the bishop, and presses it in every way he can. His urgency has not been exaggerated; and indeed it hardly can be exaggerated. So much the more significant is the absence of the one decisive argument which would have made all the rest superfluous. With all his urgency, he never says, Obey the bishop as the Lord ordained, or as the apostles gave command.[1] Even if this is not always the first argument of a man who believes it, he cannot get far without using it. The continued silence of so earnest an advocate as Ignatius is a plain confession that he knew of no such command: and the ignorance of one who must have known the truth of the matter would seem decisive that no such command was given.

The theory of an apostolic command is needless as well as unhistorical. Given that there was no

[1] The only passages I can find which have even been supposed to mean this are:—

(a) *Eph.* 3 οἱ ἐπίσκοποι οἱ κατὰ τὰ πέρατα ὁρισθέντες ἐν I. X. γνώμῃ εἰσίν. But this means not that the bishops were appointed by the will of Christ, but that they share the mind of Christ. So Lightfoot.

(b) *Trall.* 7 Be ἀχώριστοι I. X. καὶ τοῦ ἐπισκόπου καὶ τῶν διαταγμάτων τῶν ἀποστόλων, where Lightfoot says, "The reference is doubtless to the institution of episcopacy." But it does not mean that the apostles "instituted episcopacy" on the sense of making it a binding ordinance for all churches. For (1) if Ignatius alluded at all to so decisive a fact, it is inconceivable that he should never mention it again. (2) There is no need to take the διατάγματα (plural) more narrowly than the παραδόσεις of 2 Thess. ii. 15 or 1 Cor. xi. 2. (3) If the apostles appointed Polybius bishop of Tralles, the fact would be alluded to in τοῦ ἐπισκόπου, and the διατάγματα would be injunctions to obey him, live soberly, etc., not general commands to other churches to have a bishop. Usage does not require the compound word to be taken as necessarily meaning such general commands.

apostolic command the other way, the spread of episcopacy over the churches in the second century is as easily accounted for as the spread of despotism over Europe in the sixteenth, and by much the same causes. A heavy strain must have come upon the churches when the great apostles were cut off, and the destruction of Jerusalem and the rise of heresies seemed to usher in the last times. They had also their internal dissensions, for we may be sure from what we see in the New Testament that Corinth was not the only church troubled with factions. Now that they could no longer refer their disputes to apostolic authority, the need of bracing up and strengthening the loose government which remained was visible and urgent. In such a case men always turn to monarchy. In the state, they appoint a dictator or invest the government with fuller powers. In this case monarchical bishops were the strongest centres of unity the churches could have, at a time when they evidently needed all the strength they could get. Episcopacy was plainly the strongest form of government; and if the last survivors of the apostles encouraged the drift in that direction, they did nothing else than what common sense required. It was so clearly the right policy for that time that nothing short of an apostolic prohibition would have had any chance of checking it.

But what was the nature of the process? Was the bishop developed downward from the apostles, or upward from the presbyters, or did he arise in some third way? The first theory is quite untenable. The apostle's work, as we have seen, differs entirely from that of the bishop, and there is no evidence that he ever gave up his calling to become a bishop. The

second will be in the main the true account—that one of the bishops became *the* bishop, while the rest remained simple presbyters. The bishop is as regularly connected with the presbyter-bishops of earlier times as he is sharply separated from the apostles. The change may in some cases have been sudden; but it was more likely gradual, and we know for certain that one church made it after another, so that it cannot have been made in obedience to any general command. Thus too we can explain the easy transition to the new form of government, and the *naïve* way in which most of the early teachers are called bishops by later writers. Many of them may have been bishops, without being monarchical bishops. Supposing for example that apostles made Polycarp one of the bishops at Smyrna, and that in course of time he attained an undisputed primacy among them, it would be an easy slip, and not altogether a mistake, to say that they made him bishop of Smyrna. And if this is not true of Polycarp, it may be true of others.

A gradual change is not often easy to trace. All that can be said in this case is that the process is not begun in the Pastoral Epistles, which argue from the bishop to the elder, and that there is no trace of it in the New Testament, in the *Teaching*, in Clement, and even in Hermas, in all of which the bishop is indistinguishable from the elder. On the other hand, he stands out clear in Ignatius, and seventy years later the new system is so well established that Irenæus can speak of it as ancient.

There is another way in which episcopacy may sometimes have arisen. The bishop in some cases may have been developed downward from the vicars-

apostolic, though scarcely from the wandering prophets who are more akin to the apostles. Timothy, on the other hand, has very much the position of a bishop at Ephesus, though with a temporary commission only. Meanwhile he governs very much as a later bishop would. Now imagine that instead of being recalled, he was left stranded there by St. Paul's death. If such a man remained at his post, as he very likely would, he would at once become a true monarchical bishop. Apostles had entrusted a church to him, and Providence had made him the bishop thereof.[1]

The churches underwent an immense change in the course of the second century. They began it as weak societies with a fading tradition; they ended as communities with an organization which the state itself soon came to envy. The formation of the Canon supplied them with a written standard of

[1] Traces of episcopacy near the end of the first century are scanty. Lightfoot *Ign.* i. 391 finds four allusions :—

(1) Irenæus, *Haer.* III. iii. 3 Polycarp *ὑπὸ ἀποστόλων κατασταθεὶς εἰς τὴν Ἀσίαν ἐν τῇ ἐν Σμύρνῃ ἐκκλησίᾳ ἐπίσκοπος*—hardly before 90.

(2) Polycrates *ap.* Eus. v. 23 says *cir.* 190 that seven of his relations had been *ἐπίσκοποι* : and as he was himself a man of sixty, some of these may date back to the end of the first century.

(3) Clem. Al. *Quis Dives* 42. St. John travelling about, *ὅπου μὲν ἐπισκόπους καταστήσων, ὅπου δὲ ὅλας ἐκκλησίας ἁρμόσων, ὅπου δὲ κλήρῳ ἕνα γέ τινα κληρώσων τῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος σημαινομένων.* The date may be in the earlier years of Domitian, when the apostle was not too old for active work.

(4) *Fragm. Mur.* tells how St. John *cohortantibus condiscipulis et episcopis suis* undertook to write his Gospel.

None of these is a strong case. For (1), no doubt "Irenæus is exact," and no doubt Polycarp became bishop of Smyrna : but he may very well have begun as a vicar-apostolic, or even as one bishop out of several. For (2) Polycrates has just named undoubted bishops like Thraseas and Sagaris, so that his relatives were probably bishops like them : but they need not date back beyond the ninety years of the second century. In (3) and (4) there is nothing to hinder the word from being taken in the N.T. sense, and we must leave it open whether *ἕνα γέ τινα* in (3) refers to a bishop, a vicar-apostolic, or a presbyter.

doctrine, the introduction of creeds gave them a ready test of teaching, and the growth of the episcopate gave them the strongest possible form of government. It is true that these processes were not yet completed. The Canon had a fringe of uncertainty, the creeds were plastic in wording, and the bishop's power was limited by the more or less indefinite rights of elders, confessors, and laity. Still the greatness of the change tempts many to describe it as worldly corruption. They may be right, if Christianity is no more than a philosophy discovered by Jesus of Nazareth, or if it is a rigid law of the Jewish sort, but not if it is a revelation through historic facts. In the main the change was not only legitimate but necessary, if the Gospel was not to be lost in the swamps of heathenism and heresy. It was as necessary as the replacement of the Continental Congress by the Constitution of the United States, and for much the same reason. The choice was, This or anarchy.

The danger was not in the organization of the sundry churches, or even in their closer connexion with each other, but in the conception of the one church. The one holy catholic church in which we believe is neither a visible assemblage of churches, nor an invisible election of individuals. It is heavenly and ideal, and therefore real. It is one, because charity is already unity, whereas a mere unity of earthly government would be a unity in Satan. It is holy—not that it is free from sinners, but because it lives in Christ. It is catholic, not simply because the churches are scattered to the ends of the earth, but because its life is of a higher order than space and time. It bears its witness in earth and heaven

that So God loved the world; but it has no government or laws of human making, and councils and churches claim in vain its august authority.

In the second century men found St. Paul's conception of the church as hard to understand as his doctrine of faith. To a certain distance they did understand it. Ignatius already speaks of the church as catholic in virtue of its universal spread, or at any rate its universal mission; and the Letter of the church of Smyrna (156 or 157) calls it catholic in opposition to the heresies, which were supposed to be no more than local troubles. But the use of the word in any sense is enough to shew their consciousness that the visible churches formed an organic whole in Christ. Nor was the church militant unmindful of its relation to the church triumphant. The dead were commemorated in the Supper of the Lord, and individuals may have prayed for them from the first, though the practice cannot be clearly traced in Scripture,[1] and certainly was not enjoined by Christ himself, by his apostles, or by the early churches. Then again, as we have seen at Smyrna and at Lyons, the relics of the martyrs were anxiously collected, and their "birth days" kept with solemn thankfulness. There were dangers in all these practices, but no great abuse was made of them in the first three centuries. The real danger was the other way. After all, the natural man always prefers the concrete and visible to the spiritual—which is invisible. So the common sort of Christians were disposed to find the holy catholic church in the aggregate of the visible churches, and to claim for

[1] The household of Onesiphorus (2 Tim. i. 16) would be dependants, not children—*familia*, not family.

these its attributes. One party wanted to keep it holy by turning out the sinners: but the more part, especially in the West, were chiefly bent on maintaining its catholicity by shutting out the heathen and the heretic from all hope of mercy. They were themselves favourites of heaven: the rest were "stubble for eternal fire." [1]

In other words, it was right and good that bishops should be constituted guardians of the tradition: but it was not good that the tradition should be made to cover doctrines and customs indiscriminately, or when it was supposed to need no further verification; and the conception of the church was fundamentally mistaken when an unbroken succession of bishops was made the guarantee of unity. This false conception underlies the threats of Victor and Stephen to excommunicate churches which did not follow the Roman practice on Easter and rebaptism: and though Firmilian's reply, that other churches had as good a right as Rome to excommunicate, was a sufficient one, it does not go to the root of the matter. In truth, it is one thing to rely on the Holy Spirit's guidance in making such regulations as the churches might require; quite another to take for granted that such guidance is given to one visible institution and no other. We can already see how it became possible after the age of Athanasius to believe in the inerrancy of general councils, and to persecute those who did not.

Such then was the organization of the local churches which were scattered through the Empire in the second century. The unity they acknowledged

[1] The phrase is Peter Damiani's, the doctrine Tertullian's and Cyprian's.

was still essentially spiritual—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all. Unity of government or order there was none yet. Every church was independent of the rest, and free to serve Christ in its own way, if only it did serve Christ. The church of Rome claims no jurisdiction over that of Corinth in Clement's time: it only tenders its good offices for the restoration of order. Yet the churches were not without external bonds, and were gradually drawn together by the logic of events, till their original independence became a thing of the past.

In the first place, travel was easier under the Empire than in any later time before the spread of railways. The sea was peaceful after the defeat of Sextus Pompeius, and some of the ships which traversed it were large. St. Paul had 276 souls on board, Josephus 600. On land, the Roman peace, the Roman roads, and the comparative scarcity of custom-houses made active intercourse possible. The Jews were very migratory, and there are few writers of the second century who had not seen a good deal of the world. Dio Chrysostom, Lucian and Apuleius were travelled men. Of the Christians, we trace Justin from Samaria to Ephesus, and thence to Rome; Tatian from Assyria to Rome, and back to the East; Irenæus from Asia to Rome, and so to Gaul. Tertullian saw Greece and Rome; Clement wandered from Greece to Italy, and studied in the East before he settled down at Alexandria, while Origen travelled to Palestine, Rome, and Cappadocia. There were few also of the great heretics who did not sooner or later bring their heresies to Rome.

From this general habit of travel arose the practice

of giving commendatory letters to the travellers, by way of precaution against bad characters and false brethren. The practice may have been taken over from the Jews, for we find it in full vigour even in the New Testament.[1] With these letters, the traveller was sure of a welcome and of any help he needed, either to continue his journey or to settle in the place. The letters were drawn up in a fixed form;[2] and the Apostolical Constitutions make them a passport, excommunicating those who receive strangers who fail to produce them. There was need of caution: else the παρείσακτοι ψευδάδελφοι and the χριστέμποροι would have been many.

As the commendatory letters soon came to be addressed by the bishop of one city to the bishop of another, they were the usual means of mutual recognition among bishops. Thus the council at Antioch in 269 which deposed Paul of Samosata requests Dionysius and Maximus to write to the new bishop Domnus: and Athanasius (as we have seen) in the fourth century notifies to the bishops in his Festal Letters the changes in the Egyptian sees, "that they may know to whom they should write." But these were not the only episcopal letters. Every bishop would notify his appointment to his neighbours; and the older or more conspicuous bishops were in the habit of writing letters of exhortation or advice to other churches. These letters in fact form a large part of the Christian literature of the second century. We have the letter of Clement to the Corinthians,

[1] *e.g.* 2 Cor. iii. 1, Rom. xvi. 1, Acts xviii. 27. They are not expressly mentioned in the *Teaching* 12, which orders "every one who comes in the name of the Lord" to be received first, and only tested afterwards.

[2] Hence the ἐπιστολαὶ συστατικαί become in Latin *epistolae formatae*, or *formatae* simply.

and the letters of Ignatius. One letter of Polycarp remains, and others are mentioned. But the great letter-writer seems to have been Dionysius of Corinth. Eusebius quotes only a fragment of his answer to Soter of Rome; but he tells us how Dionysius wrote to the Lacedæmonians, to the Athenians to stir them up to the faith and Christian living, which they had forgotten since the persecution had carried off Publius their bishop. He wrote also to the Nicomedians against Marcion, and to Gortyna and the rest of the churches in Crete. In writing to the church at Amastris in Pontus, he names Palmas the bishop, expounds passages of Scripture, exhorts them at length concerning marriage and purity, and bids them restore all that return from sin or heresy. From this it will be seen how much the welfare of every church was understood to concern its neighbours. Otherwise Dionysius could not have written in this way without making himself a general nuisance. Once indeed he did get a sharp rebuff. He wrote to the church of Cnossus in Crete, exhorting Pinytus the bishop not to lay on the brethren so heavy a burden concerning chastity, but to take into account the weakness of most people. Pinytus replied with courteous irony that he really could not continue to feed his flock on milk when they were able to receive strong meat. But this repulse must have been an exception. The letters of Dionysius must have had great influence, if "apostles of the devil" found it worth their while to "fill them with tares."

Stronger measures followed. If a church was in an unsatisfactory state, and especially if its bishop taught novelties, its neighbours might confer together

instead of writing separately. These conferences were at first quite informal. The bishops would usually come; but they were open even to laymen. No doubt councils were chiefly guided by bishops from the first, so that their meetings are very commonly described as meetings of so many bishops, as if other members were missing or unimportant. But the practice of limiting effective membership to bishops only began to grow up in the East during the fourth century, and the full doctrine implied in Cyprian's theory—that none but bishops can decide questions of doctrine, is hardly even yet quite settled in the Church of Rome.[1] In the third century however Origen and Malchion were the chief doers in the councils held against Beryllus of Bostra and Paul of Samosata; and the latter is expressly named along with the bishops (who do not even distinguish themselves from him as bishops) in the Letter of the council.[2] At Nicæa itself conspicuous parts were taken by Athanasius the deacon and by Constantine the layman, who was not even baptized.

The churches would naturally confer together from very early times; but the first councils we hear of were those convened on the Montanist question in Asia,[3] which we may date *circ.* 160. After these come councils on the Easter Question; and thenceforth councils were assembled at every difficulty. They were indeed the only way in which a number of more or less independent churches could come to an agree-

[1] Abbots and generals of the orders had the *votum decisivum* at Trent, and the cardinal-deacon Pole was one of the legates.

[2] Eus. vii. 30. There is no break from Helenus, who was a bishop, to Malchion, who was a presbyter. Other cases may be given: but on the other hand, bishops only seem to vote in Cyprian's council in 256. There cannot have been much stickling for rights on either side.

[3] Do. v. 16.

ment, so that they tended to increase in frequency, in numbers, in authority, and in the expanse of country from which their members came.

But there were two serious weaknesses in the system of government by councils. In the first place, the decisions of councils had no sanction. A bishop might be put to some shame and inconvenience if his commendatory letters were refused: but what was to be done if he would not yield to the opinion of his neighbours? Cyprian refused even to put pressure on the bishops who did not rebaptize heretics, and would probably have answered that any bishop who was not an open heretic must be left to the judgment of God. But this refusal arose from an exaggeration of the bishop's authority, and did injustice to the faithful of his flock who were not partakers of his sin. So further measures had to be taken. Even Western councils had decided between rival bishops, as in the case of Basilides and Martialis in 254: and Cyprian was the chief promoter of the council, because Basilides and Martialis had been apostates in the Decian persecution. But Basilides had resigned his office, and the council decided only that he could not reclaim it from a successor lawfully chosen by his church. It was a clear step forward when the bishops at Antioch *cir.* 267 deposed Paul of Samosata for heresy, and themselves chose Domnus in his place. But after all, they had only the opinion of the churches behind them, so Paul kept the property of the church in spite of them. As only the civil power could turn him out, a second step forward was taken after the defeat of Zenobia in 273. Appeal was laid before the emperor Aurelian. Unfriendly as he was to the Christians, he gave "a very reasonable

decision,"[1] that the church property belonged to the bishop who was recognized by the bishops of Rome and Italy. In this way the church ceased to be a voluntary society. The council enforced its decision by the help of the state; but the state could not give that help without making its own definition of Christian orthodoxy.

The other weakness of this form of government was that councils might disagree. Of course the decisions of a council, even on questions of doctrine, might be revised by a later council. Thus Athanasius defends the action of the Nicene council in adopting the word ὁμοούσιον, which the council at Antioch in 269 had rejected as heretical: and he defends it not on the ground that an œcumenical council can overrule a local council, but by arguing that the decisions of a council may always be revised, even by a smaller gathering. He protests against setting two councils in opposition on the ground that one is earlier or larger than the other.[2] The Arianizers at Sardica in 343 seem first to have maintained that the acts of councils are irreversible. But the weakness we speak of lay not in the changes that every sane government must make in course of time, but in the disagreement of rival councils. The decisions of a council at Alexandria might be rejected in Syria, as the condemnation of Origen was: and if a man's doctrine was pronounced heretical by one council, it might be approved as orthodox by another; and then the government would be divided against itself. The difficulty was manifest long before Constantine endeavoured to remove it by calling an œcumenical council, fondly

[1] Eus. vii. 30.

[2] Ath. *de Syn.* 43. pp. 604, 605.

hoping that a decision of the whole episcopate would not be gainsaid, or at any rate that the secular arm would be strong enough to put down the gainsayers.

Another cause which helped to destroy the independence of churches was the growth of the power afterwards called metropolitan. This growth was fairly begun, though not much more than begun, within our period. It arose naturally, from the inequality of churches. One might be in a large congregation in a great and wealthy city, a commercial centre and a seat of civil government, while another stood for a petty country-town in a poor and mostly heathen district quite out of the way of trade. In the fourth century one bishop's income might be thirty pounds of gold, while another had no more than two. In an age when the welfare of every church was the recognized concern of all its neighbours, the influence of the great churches must have been strong. Their customs would be followed, their help accepted, their wishes deferred to, till influence passed into jurisdiction. Again, there were frequent meetings of bishops, as for holding councils or for witnessing and approving elections, at which some one bishop would necessarily take the lead : and the natural primacy of the chief city would seldom be set aside for any claims of personal eminence.[1] This also would emphasize the inequality of churches, and help the growth of jurisdiction.

The process was gradual, and therefore is not easily traced ; but we can safely say that early in the third century we find few signs (unless in Egypt) of any

[1] Councils seem always presided over by the bishop of some considerable city, except in Africa, where there was more sense of equality among bishops. In Cyprian's councils they seem to rank by seniority ; and in some parts at some times the chair was taken by the senior bishop present.

jurisdiction exercised by one church over another. But we soon observe a growing habit of referring to the bishop of some great city "and his bishops." True, Cyprian's whole theory of the church implied the equality of bishops, and he utterly disavows for himself as well as others any "tyrannical" claim to authority by one bishop over another. But even Cyprian could not stay the drift of the time. The Council of Nicæa recognizes it as "quite clear" that no man can be made a bishop without the consent of the metropolitan, and confirms and regulates "the old customs" which had given a still higher jurisdiction (afterwards called patriarchal) to the bishops of Alexandria, Rome and Antioch. The details of this lie beyond our period: but all through the third century we miss the subordination of the *chorepiscopi* or country bishops to the bishops of their cities, which we might have expected to be the first step of the process. The reason is that the *chorepiscopi* are a comparatively late development. Churches were established in cities and grew up as city churches, so that it was some time before bishops were wanted for outlying districts and villages. The first trace of them seems to be the complaint of the bishops at Antioch *cir.* 267, that Paul of Samosata "induces his creatures the bishops and presbyters of the neighbouring country districts and cities" to preach his own heresy.[1] But when we next meet them early in the fourth century, their subordination is clear enough. The council of Ancyra forbids them (except perhaps with the bishop's written permission) to ordain presbyters or deacons.[2] So the

[1] Eus. vii. 30. § 10.

[2] *Can.* 13: but the text is so difficult that we cannot be sure whether the exception applies to this prohibition.

council of Nicæa allowed the bishop to give the title of bishop to a former Meletian bishop; and in default of this directed him to give him the place of a *chor-episcopus* or of a presbyter, "that he might not cease to be visibly one of the clergy, and yet that there might not be two bishops in one city."[1]

The formation of a hierarchy among the churches was also helped by their tendency to imitate the organization of the state. It was natural that Romans should think in terms of the Roman Empire, and worship in Christ a heavenly emperor. The centurion at Capernaum, who makes him the *imperator* of the host of heaven, has already struck out the fruitful thought of the *militia dei vivi*—that the service of Christ is like the service of Cæsar, but in every way still nobler. Church and Empire might be deadly enemies: but they were none the less twin powers in their world-wide range and in their conflicting claims to rule the whole of life. It was natural that the kingdom of Christ on earth should follow the earthly order of Cæsar's earthly kingdom; and it was good that the episcopate which had to deal with the state should be organized on the lines of the state, with a bishop in every city, a metropolitan in every province, and a patriarch in every civil diocese, so that the *curia* of the city, the governor of the province and the *vicarius* of the diocese might each have at hand a church official of analogous rank. This is the ideal towards which the church was tending in the fourth century, though its higher stages were never completed. Rome would tolerate no second patriarch in the West, and finally reduced the power of metropolitans to a shadow; while Constantinople arrogated

[1] *Canon* 8.

three dioceses, and ended by receiving appeals from the other two. In the third century the process is beginning, and is naturally most visible in Cyprian, the most Roman of the writers of the time. Thus he looks on the bishops as Christ's *vicarii*, judging *vice sacra* like the emperor's *vicarii*. So too the councils tend to become councils of a province or a diocese; and the election of bishops witnessed and approved by the bishops who chance to be present becomes an appointment by the bishops of the province in their corporate capacity. The council of Nicæa recognizes the change, and completes it by adding that the appointment is not to be valid unless it is ratified by the metropolitan.[1]

[1] *Canon* 4.

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